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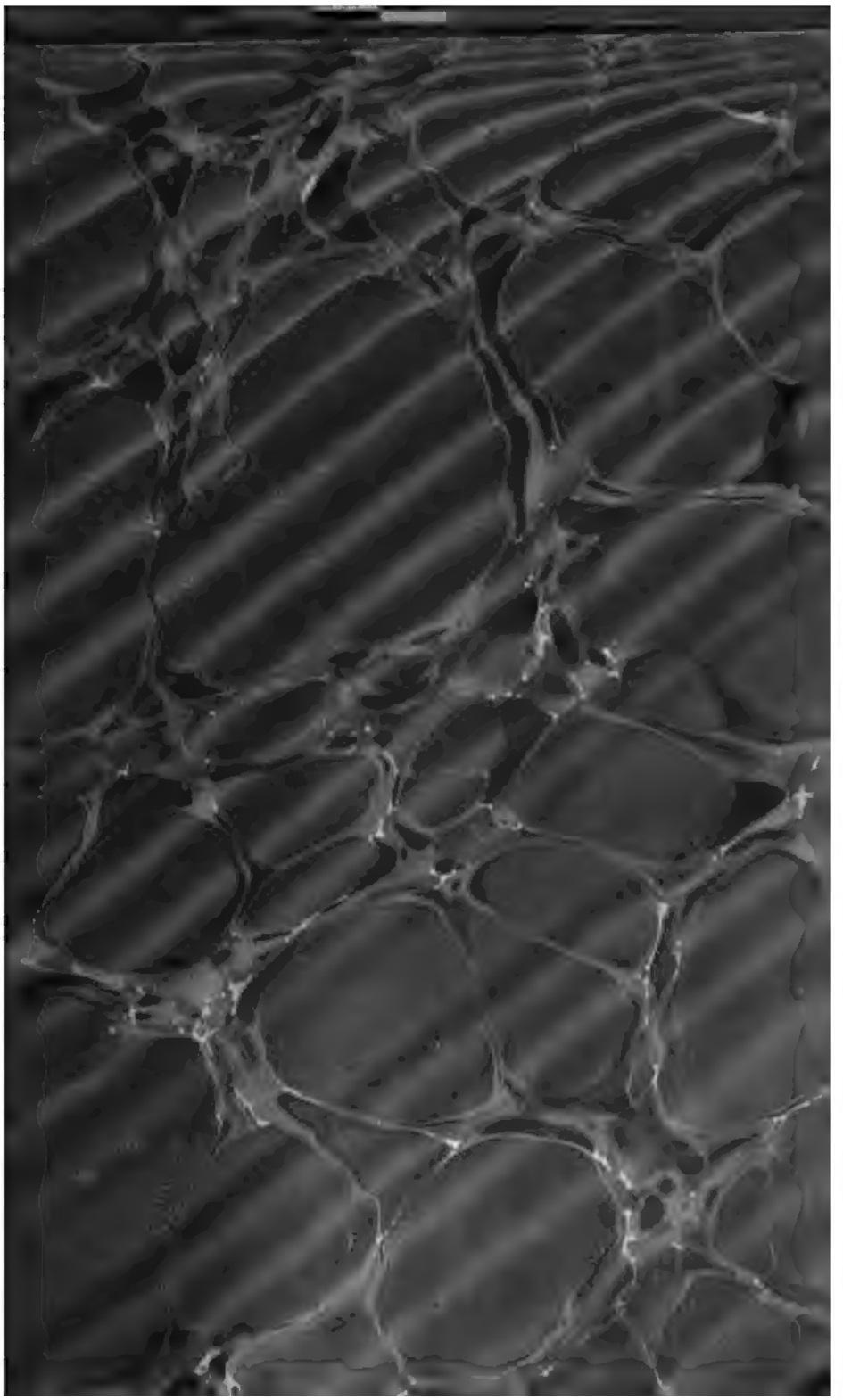

4 vols

820.8
H43

LONDON:
PRINTED BY CHARLES REYNELL,
LITTLE PULTENEY STREET.

ADDRESS.

In ushering before the reading world the Fifth Volume of the 'Romancist and Novelist's Library,' it would be unnecessary for the Editor to offer any remark whatever, other than an expression of warm gratitude to his patrons, were it not that the more popular form now assumed by the work has obtained for it a large and increasing body of new subscribers, to whom it may be desirable briefly to recapitulate the nature of the undertaking, and to state what has already been effected in the Four previous volumes. The object of the work is to form a complete Library of Fiction, embodying the productions of authors of all times and all countries. Every good work that exists in this vast and most useful class of literature will be found in our pages. The English and American works, being presented in the precise words of the author (a very important feature, when it is considered how great have been the mutilations of some of our best writers, in editions brought out subsequent to their death); and translations being rendered with the most sedulous endeavour to give the creations of each novelist, in terms as nearly resembling his own, as the genius of the respective languages will permit.

The 'Romancist and Novelist's Library,' in short for comprehensiveness of design, care in execution, and cheapness in cost, will deserve to supersede every other collection of a similar nature; and the Proprietors have no doubt that their efforts will realise this great object,—an object, they may observe, of no less importance to the public than to themselves; for at present the reader who desires to possess anything approaching to a library of fiction, has to expend a very large sum in the purchase of single works and collections of works, of every possible form and size; whereas the 'Romancist and Novelist's Library' will furnish him with all that is worthy of acceptation in this class, in a uniform series, and at a cost which can occasion no sensible deficiency in the pockets, even of the poorest, while the result will be a body of reading which has afforded instruction to the best and wisest, presented in a form which will do no discredit to the book-shelves of the wealthy.

With reference to the four volumes already published, it will be sufficient to state that they contain no fewer than 250 Romances, Novels, and Tales, by some of the best Novelists of all Countries; among whom may be named Mrs Radcliffe, Monk Lewis, Mrs Inchbald, D'Arlincourt, Victor Hugo, Paul de Kock, Shelley, Roche, Reeve, Porter, Maturin, &c. &c. &c.

Arrangements have been made by which several copyright productions of writers of reputation will from time to time appear in the 'Romancist and Novelist's Library.'

FATAL REVENGE.

INTRODUCTION.

At the siege of Barcelona by the French, in the year 1697, two young officers entered into the service at its most hot and critical period. Their appearance excited some surprise and perplexity. Their melancholy was Spanish their accent Italian, their names and habits French.

They distinguished themselves in the service by a kind of careless and desperate courage, that appeared equally insensible of praise or of danger. They forced themselves into all the *coup de mains*, the wild and perilous sallies that abound in a spirited siege, and mark it with a greater variety and vivacity of character than a regular campaign. Here they were in their element. But among their brother officers, so cold, so distant, so repulsive, that even they who loved their courage, or were interested by their melancholy, stood aloof in awkward and hesitating sympathy. Still, though they would not accept the offices of the benevolence their appearance inspired, they were involuntarily always conciliating. Their figures and motions were so eminently noble and striking, their affection for each other so conspicuous, and their youthful melancholy so deep and hopeless, that every one inquired and sought intelligence of them, from an impulse stronger than curiosity. Nothing could be learnt, nothing was known or even conjectured of them.

During the siege an Italian officer, of middle age, arrived to assume the command of a post of distinction. His first meeting with these young men was remarkable: they stood speechless, and staring at each other for some time. In the mixture of emotions that passed over their countenances, no one predominant or decisive could be traced by the many and anxious witnesses that surrounded them.

As soon as they separated, the Italian officer was persecuted with inquiries about the strangers. He answered none of them; yet he admitted that he knew circumstances sufficiently extraordinary relating to the young men, who, he said, were natives of Italy.

A few days after, Barcelona was taken by the French forces. The assault was terrible; the young officers were in the very rage of the fight, they coveted and courted danger; they stood amid showers of grape and ball; they rushed into the heart and crater of explosions; they literally "wrought in the fire." The effects of their dreadful courage were foreseen by all, and cries of recal and expostulation sounded around them on every side, in vain.

On the French taking possession of the town, there was a general demand for the brothers. With difficulty the bodies were discovered, and brought with melancholy pomp into the commander's presence. The Italian officer was there; every eye was turned on him.

There was an appeal in the general silence. The Italian felt, and answered it.—"No circumstances but these," said he, "in which I see these brave, unhappy men, would justify me in the disclosure I am about to make. I am acquainted with their name, and their country, and their misfortunes. The discovery cannot affect them now. They are for ever beyond the reach of shame or pain; but for the living, who are not beyond instruction, the tale is intended, and to them may it prove useful." At intervals, which its length required, he related the following story.

CHAPTER I.

"Sæva Pelopis domus."—Horace.
"Pelops' cruel offspring."

About the year 1690 the family of Montorio, one of the most distinguished in Italy, occupied their hereditary seat in the vicinity of Naples. To the tale of the strange fortunes of this family it may be necessary to prefix a sketch of its character.

It was marked by wild and uncommon features, such as rarely occur in those of more temperate climates. But in a country, like the seat of these adventures, where climate and scenery have almost as much effect on the human mind as habit and education, the wonder dissolves, and the most striking exhibition of moral phenomena present only the reflected consequences of the natural.

The general idea of the Italian character was fully realised in that of the Montorio family,—weak, yet obstinate; credulous, but mistrustful; inflamed with wild wishes to attain the secrets and communion of another world, yet sunk in the depth of both national and local superstition. Their palaces were haunted by groups of monks and magicians, alchymists and astrologers; and amid the most superstitious state of the country of superstition, the house of Montorio was distinguished by weak and gloomy credulity. The character and habits of the present count were, like those of his predecessors, singular. In the early part of his life he had unexpectedly succeeded to his ancestorial wealth and honours by the sudden death of their possessor and all his family. Shocked by such an occurrence of domestic calamity, the count had precipitately quitted his castle; nor could he, till after a considerable time, prevail on himself to quit Apulia and revisit it. When at length he returned it was visible that the blow which his spirits had sustained was irrecoverable. He returned, accompanied by his countess, his children, and a numerous retinue of attendants; and from that moment the sight or sound of cheerfulness was banished from the walls of Muralto. The aged domestics, who had resided there in their lord's absence, and to whom that absence had felt like their own exile, now saw with sorrow that the change his return had produced was almost for the worse. The habits of the castle, and its present possessor, recalled to their memory the former master; and the festivity of happier days threw a deeper shade over the stately gloom of the present. Of their former lord they were lavish in commendation; and as it is the nature of enthusiasm to remember only the virtues of the object it delights to praise, while they celebrated the excellencies and graces of his character, they forgot that he had been jealous, violent, and vindictive even beyond Italian irritability; that his credulity was without bounds, his rage without restraint, and his vengeance without remorse. The many graces, however, of his person and, mind, and the melancholy fate of a man who had suddenly died amid the most exquisite sensibility and enjoyment of domestic delights, drew a shade over the memory of his failings; and those who remembered him remembered him only as the master whose eye poured forth benignity, and whose hand was lavish of bounty.

To the remembrance of such days and characters, the present afforded a striking contrast. The count, dark, silent, solitary, repelled all approach, retreated from all attachment; and when his attendants raised their eyes to his, it was said they saw an expression there that made them withdraw them, under an impulse of terror, intuitive and inexpressible. The temper of a master, however ungenial, soon pervades his household. The servants glided through the apartments with steps that seemed to dread their own echo; orders were communicated in whispers, and executed in silence; and the bells that summoned its inmates to rest, or to religion, were almost the only sounds heard within its walls. Sometimes this calm was suddenly and strangely broken; and the count, attended by his confessor, would often summon the family to attend him at midnight to the chapel, where they remained engaged in solemn and severe acts of religion till morning; and often, under still more terrible agitations of mind, he would hurry the countess and his family from their rest, and compel them to accompany him by night to Naples, from whence, after a short residence, he would return to his castle, to

silence and to solitude. A conduct so extraordinary excited many comments; but the recen misfortunes, and known character of the family, were a sufficient answer to these, and curiosity soon grew weary of a subject that furnished nothing to gratify inquiry. Besides, the count had now arrived at that period of life when a man is chiefly represented by his children; when the stronger features of a character are dimmed by the distance of retirement and rest—when declining ambition reposes itself amongst those for whom it has toiled, and the hopes and views of society are transferred to its young successors.

Of the count's numerous family, four sons and four daughters still survived. All of them partook of the peculiarities which marked their house—the two elder sons eminently. Amid the family group, the bold and original figure of the countess stood alone. Her beauty still untouched by time—her mind unimpaired by the weakness of her sex or country—she yet seemed to share the dark despondency of her husband. But while the source and degree of their secret suffering appeared the same, their modes of sustaining it were strikingly different. His was the gloom of a mind bowed by affliction—hers, of a mind resolved to make affliction bow to it. He was wild, dejected, and unequal—she calm, collected, and silent. But her calmness was evidently that of subdued pain; it was the calmness of one who, stretched upon the rack, suffers not a groan to escape him. In the lower circles of domestic duty, she moved with a careless absence, which was neither the absence of indolence nor of affectation; it was the abstraction of a mind obviously capable of higher occupations. and from which the discharge of common duties neither required an effort, nor a suspension of its inward and peculiar operations. She performed the severest offices of religion, which her superstitious husband exacted from her, with the steady patience of one who submits to a remedy, but who expects not relief. With her children she took no comfort—from her husband she sought no counsel; whatever were her secret trials, she seemed bent to bear them, unaided, unallied, and alone. She presented the image of a great mind sinking under calamity, but sinking without complaint or weakness, like Cæsar falling at the base of Pompey's statue, but covering his face as he fell.

Of her children, her daughters appeared the most beloved; and of her sons, the two younger, though the elder were confessedly more the favourites of nature, as well as of society. At Naples, the elder, the beautiful and dissipated Ippolito, was the delight of every assembly, the soul of every pleasure. Driven from retirement, from the gloom of the castle and its inmates, entitled by his rank to mingle in the first assemblies, and indulged by his father with a splendid establishment, Ippolito plunging into all the voluptuous madness of Naples, seemed resolved to indemnify himself for the short restraint of his early years. All the rich assemblage of imagery that youth, talents, and sensibility can present, and flattery magnify and embellish, Ippolito sought to realise in his brilliant and tumultuous career. Thus the flame of genius, which should have been fed by close and inward cultivation, was wasted in wild and eccentric blazes; and society, with heedless selfishness, exhausted the powers in whose display it delighted. Had this young man been instructed, either by nature or by habit, in the conduct of his imagination, or the conquest of his passions, his being would have answered some better purpose than the delight of dissipation, or the example of a moral tale. Ippolito resembled his mother in the graces of a person which revived the finished forms of classic antiquity; a face, warm with the rich tints of Italian beauty; a dark-brown complexion, over which the glow of conversation or of sentiment, the hurry of motion or of accident, spread a speaking crimson; eyes whose lustre sometimes softened, sometimes deepened, as his dark locks were parted, or permitted to cluster over them, spoke sensibility in every change; features over which the very soul of expression hovered in a thousand charms, mingled and mutable. Such was the form that enclosed a mind bold, ardent, credulous, and volatile, of which the reason was as little under regulation as the passions. He possessed talents, but he rather delighted in their display than their exercise—and that display was of the most fantastic kind. He loved to soar into the untravelled regions of thought, to raise the airy fabrics of fancy on vacancy, to enter on the very confines of intellect, and bend over the world of shadows and unreal forms. This mental malady was aggravated by indulgence, till no proposition struck him but under the form of a paradox—no event interested him, unless darkened by a shade of mystery or adventure. But this intellectual obliquity was only partial—it was confined to his mode of apprehending, not of pursuing objects; for, when the

direction of his mind was once discovered, by an artful application to its assailable part, its future progress might be ascertained, without the least allowance for delay or deviation. Under this heated and irregular state of mind, he had embraced the study of astrology—a study of which none but those who have travelled know the influence, which is as general as it is violent; and under which foreign nobility are often known to maintain a professional astrologer in their palaces, rather as an assistant of habitual knowledge than a hidden agent of superstition. On a mind like that of Ippolito, this pursuit operated with peculiar danger; by pointing out as the subjects of its study, some of the most striking objects of sense, it tempted a mind but too susceptible of impressions from such subjects. Few can resist the emotions inspired by the night-view of an Italian sky—a view, unfolding the host of heaven in lustre, magnitude, and number, never witnessed and never imagined in our cloudy and contracted hemisphere; and few can calculate the awful solicitude to which those emotions swell, when the gazer thinks he beholds in those solemn objects the arbiters of his destiny—traces in their progress the mysterious movements of fate—and seeks from their position a knowledge of those events which are all alike solicitous to know, though conscious that their knowledge can neither hasten nor retard their approach, neither diminish their certainty, nor mitigate their inflictions. At first this study was confined to the more serious events of life; but in a short time its influence became so extensive, that it mingled in the most trivial—even in those lighter moments of which solemn thought is deemed an interruption. If this topic was alluded to, the laugh was hushed, the frolic suspended, and the giddy Ippolito became intensely thoughtful or laboriously inquisitive. Of this a proof occurred shortly after his arrival in Naples, attended by circumstances somewhat peculiar. At the gay season of the carnival, when superstition indulges her votaries with a remission of austerity, Ippolito was present at a masked ball, given by a Neapolitan of rank. On this gay evening, every hour saw him a new character, and every character was marked by some frolic of levity or some sally of wit. Through the gardens, which the softened lights, the foliage, the fountains, the invisible minstrelsy, and mingled moonlight, made to resemble the bowers of enchantment, he glided sometimes as the shepherd of Guarini, and sometimes as the hero of Ariosto. He now attracted the multitude by a spontaneous burst of eloquence and song, and now entertained a female mask with the most animating gallantry. At length, weary of frolic, he assumed the habit of a domino, and, mixing among the groups, endeavoured to receive the amusements he had so lavishly afforded. In a short time his attention was arrested by a mask who had hovered around the whole evening, apparently unconnected with any party. The dress and figure were fantastic, even beyond the license of a mask; it had united the characters of a gipsy and an astrologer, under an emblematic habit; its mask depicted a countenance wild and haggard; and its language, unlike the quaint jargon of the place, was sombrous, solemn, and unusual. This mask had frequently approached Ippolito during the evening, yet when he attempted to address it, abruptly turned away. But its language and gesture were inviting; for it sometimes sung, and sometimes scattered among the groups the following lines:—

Agents of this earthly sphere,
Now on joy's bright billow swelling,
Now pent in misery's murky dwelling,
The sport of hope, the prey of care—
But wildly anxious still to know
The mistic current's ebb and flow,
Attend my song, my skill revere,
List to believe and pause to hear—

'Tis mine to bid life's colours glow,
To swell its bliss, or soothe its woe;
From doubt's dim sphere, bid shadows fly,
And people void futurity:—
To soothe pale passion's feverous dream,
To feed ambition's lurking flame;
Chastise proud joy with menaced ill,
Fierce pain, with promised pleasure still,
Till hope wears 'mid the mimic strife,
The tints of truth, the forms of life.

Nor wants me source the skill to gain
That mocks at nature's bounded reign—
Where ocean beats against the sky,
Beyond their mingling bounds I fly,
And all amid the wheeling spheres
I read their viewless characters—
Those waning forms, so wan and pale,
That thwart the moon, all dimly sail
To the wrapt eye that reads, unfold
More than to mortal may be told—
Anon I wing the waste of night,
Arrest the comet in his flight,
And shoot upon his burning wing,
And round my spells of wonder fling.
Agents of this lower sphere,
List to believe, and pause to hear.

The festivity was now closing, and the masks dispersing: and, amid the ast murmurs of departing gaiety, this mask again approached Ippolito. He turned, it paused, and, when it spoke, its voice was tremulous and hesitating. "Youth," it said, "thy favourable

star presides to-night."—"I have, as yet, experienced but little of its influence," said Ippolito, with careless gaiety: "I have sought amusement, and found only weariness and disappointment. I have sought nectar on the lip of a Hebe, and been almost stifled with the scent of diavolone. I was on the point of conducting the goddess of chastity to a cassino, when, entreating her to remain no longer under an eclipse, I removed her mask, and discovered Diana converted into Hecate. I encountered a vestal virgin, whose shrine—" Here he was interrupted by the mask, who, mingling moral strictures with a characteristic speech, informed him, he was commissioned by the stars to announce the approach of an aeriel monitor, a little, benign, officious sylph, "Just now," said he, "darting from the planet Mercury on an invisible line of light, invisible to all eyes but mine. His task is to be your moral improvement; your happiness his delight and reward. He will assume a form, he will speak a language like your own. He will attend, he will watch, he will warn you. Beware you repel him not: for if you do, he spreads his fairy pennons, and happiness flies you for ever."

On Ippolito's peculiarly constructed mind, this address had its full effect. Similar language on any other subject he had heard with derision; but this, because mingled with the terms of astrology, arrested his attention and his curiosity. The circumstances, too, of time and place, gave an unsuspected force to the impression. Solitude succeeding to the concourse of crowds, and silence to their clamours, which still left a mixed murmur on the ear, the dim and partial light which fell on the wild features of the mask, and the tones of its voice, which every moment assumed a more plaintive and natural earnestness,—"When and where shall I see this messenger of the stars?" said Ippolito, almost seriously: "if you have power to announce his approach, you have also power to expedite it. Show me his form, let me hear his voice."—"If I do," interrupted the mask, "will you believe my prediction—will you admit the object of it to your service, your confidence?" Ippolito assented. The mask hesitated incredulously. His curiosity was now inflamed, and he promised solemnly. "Look here," said the mask, drawing from beneath its garment a glass, figured with strange characters, "look here, you are obeyed." Ippolito eagerly gazed on the glass, and beheld a face, which, looking over his shoulder, disappeared in a moment. The view was instantaneous, but the impression indelible; for the features bore a peculiar and interesting expression, which once seen could scarce be forgotten. The mask glided away, and, while Ippolito yet paused in wonder, was lost among the groups and the shadows.

Of his wonder, he felt the effect to be both pleasing and painful: pleasing, because it soothed his love of the marvellous; and painful, because the curiosity it excited was ungratified. As he slowly returned homewards, he almost expected his promised visitor to appear behind the shade of a pillar as he passed, or cross his path with some strange greeting. He had arrived, however, without interruption, at the Pilazzo di Montorio, and was preparing to ascend the steps, when a light figure, which had been leaning half unseen against the balustrade, approached, and solicited reception in the language of the mask. As it spoke, it withdrew a large hat which shaded its face, and discovered the very features which Ippolito had seen flit over the glass of the wizard. Disarmed at this moment of every power but the power to gaze, he viewed the figure, and, for an instant, suffered himself to doubt if it belonged to earth or not; then, endeavouring to recall his spirits, addressed it in a style of appropriate gaiety, inquired from what sphere it had fallen, and asked whether it had travelled on a meteor or a moonbeam? His raillery was only answered by more earnest petitions for admission, with which Ippolito, on whom the circumstances of the night had made more impression than he would either acknowledge or resist, at length complied. Such was the conduct of this light-minded young man, whose judgment and imagination were at perpetual though unequal war; and who ridiculed at one moment the feelings, whose impulse, at the next, was suffered to decide the events of life. He knew not if the person he had admitted was not an assassin or a heretic; but he knew that to admit him flattered his favourite propensity—the love of the marvellous.

CHAPTER II.

"Ah, wretch! believed the spouse of God in vain."—Pope.

On the succeeding day, Ippolito found a recent extraordinary circumstance the theme of every assembly he visited. In narratives of wonders we are never contented with facts, with-

out inquiring into motives, though the subtler springs of human actions often elude the discovery of the agents themselves. But here was ample room for conjecture. On Rosolia di Valozzi, the daughter of a noble family resident at Naples, were bestowed the most dangerous gifts of nature, an interesting form, and a mind susceptible "even to madness."

All the softer and all the stronger modes of this dangerous quality were assembled in her mind. There is a domestic sensibility which expends itself on the common vicissitudes and petty disasters of life, and there is a lofty frame of feeling which, overlooking the lower modes of human suffering, creates for itself a system of heroic dignity and unaffecting distress.

The more subtle spirit of both these was hers, but both purified, blended, and reconciled; the former, without its hackneyed parade of daily exhibition, the latter without its proud and pedantic inutility. Thus she was prevented from knowing that relief which vulgar and romantic sensibility individually enjoy (the one from the natural diminution of divided feeling, the other from the necessary remission of superhuman loftiness), and her feelings were tempered so that exquisite mixture of softness and firmness, which, whilst it sought its object and its exercise among the things of this world, would employ in their attainment a reach and energy of power only commensurate to the great objects of another.

These uncommon faculties were first developed amid objects and scenery eminently calculated to elicit the latent and stimulate the awakening sensibility of a young mind. Amid woods, whose depth of shade soothed and solemnized—seas, whose vastness and serenity poured stillness on the soul—mountains, whose wilder features mixed fear with wonder—masses of Gothic and Grecian ruins, whose very stones breathed round them that nameless spirit of antiquity which makes us tremble with a delicious dread on the ground marked by its remains; amid such scenes, Rosolia, yet an infant, wandered; amid such, her mind imbibed a tincture of enthusiasm, full, rich, and deep; amid such scenes stood the convent where Rosolia, with other female nobility, was educated. Here she wandered without a guide or a companion, for melancholy is unsocial, and enthusiasm impatient of restraint or interruption, and the feelings which she delighted to indulge sought no participation and disdained all control. Here life was expended in stimulating a sensibility already too exquisite for reason, or almost for life; and instead of subduing her mind to the pursuit of rational utility and practicable happiness, in elevating herself into the agent of another system, surrounded by forms and objects of her own creation, whose brilliancy proclaimed their want of reality, and whose exquisite and fallacious delights untuned her mind for the simplicity of substantial enjoyment. Nature and solitude gradually lead the mind to abstraction; and of abstract imagery, the most powerful and splendid are the presence and perfections of the Deity. To these, therefore, her mind was naturally elevated; and no impressions from external or temporal objects could pervert the homage of her feelings.

At the age of fourteen, therefore, never concluding that her feelings could have any other object or occasion of exercise than the present, that any subject of interest could exist, beyond the bounds of a cloister or the sphere of monasticism, she announced her intention of taking the veil within the walls of the convent where she had been educated. Her family, too wealthy for the needy policy which devotes the younger daughters of Italian families to the veil, heard her resolution with regret, and endeavoured to dissuade her from her purpose; she remained inflexible, and her parents were compelled to content themselves with obtaining the respite of one year, which it was proposed she should pass with them at Naples. To this invitation she acceded, with that disdain of temptation from which it borrows its greatest danger; and, rather to gratify her religious feelings by a solemn exercise, than to bind them by inviolable security, alone, at midnight, at the foot of the altar, she engaged herself by a solemn vow, when the importunity of the world had ceased, to return to the convent, and assume the veil. Thus fortified, she entered the world, to bestow on it a passing glance of disdain, and then quit it for ever; and, on her first appearance, was received with wonder and delight. Her pensive and nun-like beauty—the simplicity of her manner and her mind, over which the glow of enthusiasm and the shade of melancholy chased each other alternately, like the varying shades of a beautiful complexion; the careless overflow of her sentiments, at once reaching, by happy excellence, all that the refinements of practice and the labours of art profess slowly and painfully to teach; all this made her, even to the sophisticated sense of fashion, a new and exquisite feast. Rosolia at first retreated; for, though not unconscious

of excellence, she was too timid for notoriety, and too delicate for flattery. But we are easily reconciled to our own praises; and she soon appeared content to stay a little longer in the world, to irradiate and delight it.

Amid this blaze of admiration, while a soft consciousness of pleasure seemed to be stealing over her mind and senses, she became, on a sudden, more lonely and pensive than ever; her cheek grew pale, and her eyes wandered. Her family, who observed the change, and inquired the cause, received evasive answers; and when their solicitude, increasing with her increasing malady, became importunate, it was answered by her declaring that her resolution to take the veil had been delayed too long, and she was resolved to put it in immediate execution.

The scruples of conscience, though all lamented, none could oppose; and, about a year after her entrance into the world, she quitted it for ever. But from the moment that the grate was closed on her, her silence became gloom, and her melancholy misery; and after lingering a few months in hopeless dejection, she disappeared one evening after vespers, and was seen no more. Of an event so strange, none could assign either the motive or the means; and after the usual forms of inquiry and lamentation were observed, a wild conjecture, or an exclamation of wonder, were all that commemorated the fate of Rosolia.

When Ippolito returned to the palace, he found a letter from his brother Annibal, who resided with the family at the castle, and with whom he maintained a regular correspondence. The attachment which produced this was rendered remarkable by the total dissimilarity of their characters. Annibal was as timid, gloomy, and mistrustful, as Ippolito was bold, open, and credulous; but both partook equally of that attachment to dark pursuits which characterized the family, and of that inflexibility of sombrous resolution with which they adhered to a visionary pursuit, however irregularly conceived. The substance of the letter was nearly as follows:—

CHAPTER III.

"Præterea fuit in tectis de marmore templum—
Hinc exaudiri voces, et verba vocantis."—VIRGIL.

"A marble temple stood within the grove—
Oft, when she visited this lonely dome,
Strange voices issued from her husband's tomb."—DRYDEN.

"My mind has been so occupied by strange events, and the reflections they have suggested, that I have forborne, for some time past, to write to you. When about to relate them, I again revolve those circumstances, so simple in their commencement, yet gradually unfolding something that arrests incredulity itself, and still pointing onward to things dark and unknown—I revolve all this, I seem in a dream, and try in vain to give form and reality to the shadows that are hovering round me.

"I have slept and awoke again; I have stood at my casement: this is the arbutus and the laurel that wave beneath it—this is the sea-breeze that breathes freshness on me—I see the glorious sun standing in the heaven; these all are the objects of the senses, and they make their due and wonted impression on mine. Yet the objects I have lately witnessed are not less palpable than these. You have often laughed at my visionary gloom—prepare now to share the ridicule, or to resign the evidence of your senses.

"The old chapel, without the walls of the castle, has long been dilapidated, and is at present filled with workmen. You know my fondness for ruins. I strolled there after my *sieste*. I found the great doors closed, and that the workmen had entered through a chasm under one of the shattered windows. As I looked through the cavity the various features of the view, the fragments of ruin, the rustic groups, some labouring, some gazing vacantly around, and the figure of a boy, who, placed in a recess half hid among the clustering shrubs, breathed a few wild notes on his pipe, touched me with that pleasant melancholy which is suggested by the view of ancient decay and modern apathy, of desolated majesty, and ignorance gazing amongst its ruins. As I continued to lean on a projection of the chasm, unseen, I overheard a conversation, suggested by the place, and such as I would live to listen to on a wintry night, by a low, flitting, ember fire. It told of spirit and shadow, and self-lighted tapers, and bells that rung untouched within those deserted walls. I listened with curiosity pleasantly stirred, till I was roused by some dark allusions. I listened, but

could not understand. They spake 'of the count's not resting better in his bed than his ancestors in their graves, if those things were known;' and observed, that 'old white-headed Michelo, in spite of his guarded silence, was too well acquainted with them.' Though my first impulse on returning to the castle was to send for the old groom of the chambers, and satiate my appetite for the marvellous with his legendary wonders, I had no other object than to pass a vacant hour in listening to a tale that required little effort either of thought or credit. I had, at least, little apprehension of what awaited me, little fear of being in a state like that of one who is gradually impelled towards a precipice, the terrors of which he can neither measure nor avoid. Michelo came on my summons. Desirous of full information, and aware of his cautious and timid temper, I endeavoured to frame my request skilfully. 'Michelo,' said I, 'I have often listened with delight to the family legends your memory is so well stored with; but I am informed you are in possession of some still more marvellous and terrible, something you will not communicate to a common ear, and which I hope you have reserved for mine.' This address, so far from an accusation, and only implying a knowledge compatible with the purest innocence, produced the most terrible effect on the old man. His lips quivered, and his countenance changed; and, with the most earnest solemnity, he besought not to importune him for the disclosure I referred to. The impression I received from his agitation was indescribable. The vague curiosity with which I had begun the conversation, was at once exchanged for the pursuit of something I could not well define, but whose importance was increased by its obscurity.

"I told him I was now convinced he was acquainted with something — 'something which it is, perhaps, necessary for me, as a son of this house, to know—something into which more than curiosity ought to inquire.' I assured him of my favour, if he complied; and if not, menaced him with my father's displeasure. His answer, though confused and broken, I shall not soon forget. 'Oh, signor, for the Virgin's sake, let not my lord, your father, know of this conference; do not draw his vengeance on us—his vengeance is terrible. Little do you know—little, alas! do I know myself—if I knew all, or even believed what I have heard, how could I pass the chapel as I do at night—how could I traverse these lone apartments, or venture to sleep in that little turret—over the very room—where the wind sings so doleful, that if I suffered myself to think, I might fancy it was—I might run mad listening to it!' I bade him be composed, but the composure I recommended I was far from enjoying myself. My anxious love of the marvellous was mixed with other feelings; nor could I (though I affected to do so) believe the agitation of the old man was occasioned by the nugatory tales of menial superstition. He rose from his knees, condemning himself for having 'foolishly and wickedly betrayed himself, overcome by my sudden question and piercing eye.' I will not harass you with the repetition of menace and entreaty, of expostulation and evasion. He at length consented to admit me to his lone, remote turret that night, for he still dreaded our being discovered, or even observed by the family. The night, like every other period to which solicitude adds an imaginary length, was slow in arrival.

"When I ascended the turret, I thought I observed in the old man's face an expression of artificial composure, the effort of recollected and resolute craftiness. He seated himself, trimmed his lamp, and then abruptly demanded what it was I required him to relate. In the tumult of expectation, in that state of suspense which expects the disclosure of something unknown, this had entirely escaped me; and apprehending that my curiosity would be mocked by some temporary and trivial invention, hastily, and almost unintentionally, I desired him to relate the circumstances by which my father, who I understood was distantly related to the late possessor, had succeeded to the family honours. He appeared confounded, but unable to retreat; and it occurred to me, if I could engage him to commence the narrative, I might trust to his habitual prolixity to disclose what he might at first intend to conceal. After some delay, he informed me that possessor had been my uncle, my father's own brother. Of this man he gave a character that seemed to warm him into eloquence; he described it as a mixture of the most shining qualities and the fiercest passions. His love was madness; his courage, rashness; his hatred deadly; and his vengeance, though honourable, as the cavaliers in Naples call it, there was no escaping from with life. 'All your house,' continued he, 'were much attached to secret studies; your uncle was, in particular, much versed in strange books and arts, and in a way of going up to ask the stars

whether he was to be happy or miserable. Alas! it would have been better to have asked his own heart. Many a night would my lord pass on the high turrets of his castle, and, on his descent, he would walk about his apartment for hours, talking to himself about trines, and sextiles, and quadrants, and horoscopes, and ascendants—hard words, which I learnt from hearing them repeated so often, without knowing their meaning.

"'I would not, to be lord of this castle, know it; for a holy benedictine once assured me it was all heresy, and that these were only different names for Lucifer.' I will endeavour to abridge Michelo's narrative. He mentioned my uncle's marriage with the loveliest, the gentlest, the most heavenly of women. He mentioned that he had children: the picture of the countess, he said, was yet in a deserted part of the castle, with most of the furniture of those gay days; there he had removed them on my father's return to the castle. The story was sad and intricate. He told of my uncle's domestic happiness being suddenly and strangely suspended by a habit of fierceness and gloom, which he emphatically dated from the arrival of my father, and a confidential servant of his, whom he called Ascanio, at the castle.—'Even amid all the revelry and mirth on my lord's arrival,' said he, 'it was whispered by the domestics, who accompanied them from Naples, that the lady was likely to lead a life of lone, uncomfortable splendour; for, owing either to my lord's jealousy, or some secret cause of disquiet, that even then spread a shade of melancholy over her beautiful face, they both seemed resolved on total retirement. Matters grew more dark and strange; my lady wept in her chamber alone; my lord stalked silently through his. Your father appeared distracted with the distress he witnessed, and alternately conferred with each alone, I suppose, endeavouring to conciliate and soothe them. At length it was announced that my lord was to make an excursion to the Grecian isles: this excursion the countess, now near her confinement, was not to accompany; he was to be attended only by Ascanio. Ascanio, at this time, appeared to enjoy the confidence of both brothers exclusively. I envied him not. My love and fidelity to my lord were, what a domestic's should be, humble and distant, though dear. I lamented my master's sorrows, without presuming to inquire into them; but Ascanio was bold, forward, and subtle.'—'Is this Ascanio yet alive?' said I, 'he might eke out your narrative with some strange particulars.'—'He might, indeed!' said the old man. 'No, signor, he is dead; and his end was strange and fearful.' I would not tempt him to digression by inquiring. 'When my lord had now been some months gone, we could perceive that a greater consternation than ever reigned in the castle; packets were hourly arriving from abroad, the countess never quitted her apartment, and my lord, your father, appeared overborne with agitation. At length it was about the close of autumn; it had been a sickly, sultry season, and the mountain had been turbulent; and the people, while they listened to its murmurs, said that they presaged sad and strange events would soon happen. We were assembled in the hall of the castle for vespers, for the chapel was then repairing; a hot intermitting blast breathed through the casement, and some of the domestics who had been in Naples that day, told us that the mountain had sent forth strange sounds in the night, and that the city awaited the approach of that evening in terror. One of them said, that as they came along, there was a heavy murmuring through the woods, and that their tops waved without a breath of wind. 'Yes,' said another, 'but that was not the strangest object I saw in the woods to-day.' We desired him to explain; and the domestic then affirmed, with solemn asseverations, that the count, his master, had appeared to him that day in the wood, at a little distance from ——. At this fantastic account of one whom he knew to be absent in the Grecian islands, all laughed; when the man, suddenly rising from his seat, and rushing into the passage that communicates with the great stairs, called us loudly to 'see him ascending them, and beckoning to him from the balustrade.' In a moment every individual was in the passage; the echo of a step was distinctly heard, and some averred they saw a shadow pass on the stairs. But our attention was quickly withdrawn. Ascanio arrived, breathless and spent; and pushing away the eager inquirers with both his hands, hastened to your father's apartment. Meanwhile evening was aggravated by a gathering darkness; a mass of vapour issued from the mountain, and the sun appeared as a dim and bloody globe, in the midst of an immense vault of black cloud. Every one breathed an inward prayer, and none told their fears to the other, when, as in a moment, a column of fire, brighter than noon, rose from the mountain, flashing a horrible glare of yellow

light on the woods and shore, its edgings laced with lightnings, and its centre white with intense heat. It was suspended a moment at its greatest height (or appeared so to our eyes), and the next came rushing down the sides of the mountain in floods of fire; a strong concussion of the earth followed; the air and elements were in wondrous motion; and the lightnings or meteors rather, broad and flaky, hissed and wreathed in fearful play on the turret points and casements. When the first burst of terror was over, I thought of the countess and her children: she used to sit with them in a high and lonely tower, of which I scarcely believed but it was crumbled to ashes. I hastened up the great stairs, when—— The terrors of my tale are coming on; they are too strong for me; let me have air—let me have breath, signor.'

"Solicitous both for the old domestic and his story, I assisted him to rise, and supported him to his narrow casement. In a few moments he respired. I watched the progress of his recovery; my eye was fixed on his; it became suddenly fixed and hollow. He extended his arm from the casement; but the breath which he had but just recovered utterly forsook him—he could not speak—my eye followed the pointing of his finger. The night was still and dark; the ruined chapel was beneath the casement. As I gazed, a light, pale but distinct, fell on the walls, and on the shrubs that have mantled round them. I watched it; it wandered, borne by no hand, accompanied by no step, along the chancel (I saw it gleaming past our windows), and expired at the tomb of our uncle. Michelo and I remained aghast; we remained near an hour, silent, scarcely breathing—we saw it return. Then I tried to swallow down the thick and stifling sensation with which my throat was filled. 'Michelo,' said I, 'has this been seen before?'—'Often,' said the old man, 'by me.'—'Has no visible form, no distinct sound, attended it?'—'Often, said he again. 'And have you ever witnessed ——'—'Listen, signor; to you alone would I tell what I have witnessed. Other strange appearances have long been talked of within these walls; this is but recent. A few nights ago, when I first observed that light, I was tempted to follow it. I thought it might be some one whom curiosity or ignorance had led there, and I entered without apprehension. The light that glided before me disappeared at the tomb of Count Orazio; I heard a sound issuing from it, that could scarce be called a groan, or anything that signifies a human accent. I approached it, I know not how; I shudder now to tell it; yet I remember I did not shudder then. The massive grating of the vault was wrenched open—I descended—yes, I did descend: a flash of light burst forth again, and as it hissed on the damp arching, the palls waved with a visible motion—the coffins rattled on the biers—something I could neither distinguish nor describe, hovered before my eyes—a pressure (not of a fleshly hand) came over my face; it was bony, and cold, and damp. I lost all further power or feeling; and when I recovered, I was laid without the walls of the chapel, on the damp grass, my lamp burning beside me. Could I have travelled there in a trance? I hasted to my turret-room: I stood to collect my breath—my eyes fell on that mirror you are looking at now—my face reeked with lived streaks of blood! To none but you have I mentioned this.'

"No one could hear the old man's earnest voice, and look on his pale face, and disbelieve him. You know my habit, to reason on everything; but what could I do with what I had just seen and heard?—they were too palpable for fancy, yet too wild for conjecture; and I endeavoured, alike in vain, to treat them as a fume of mental vapour, or to try them by any rule of sober solution. My thoughts wandered from Michelo and his narrative to myself; insensibly I began to conceive myself in his situation, possessed, it should seem, of dark secrets, and tempted to supernatural intercourse. I examined, involuntarily, how such an emergency would find me prepared. I calculated the chances of deception. I inquired into the constitution of my mind, and the probable power of such impressions over it, were it exposed to them. The result gave me a strange satisfaction. I felt as if I were called to such a trial, and would approve myself in it. I am strong of frame, steady of nerve, slow in perception; possessing but little of the light or fantastic powers of mind; seldom indulging them in their airy play; and when I do, surveying it as the traveller surveys the fallacious dance of the fairy lights, only to shun their illusions. Such a character presents only one assailable part in that attachment to visionary subjects, by which, I have heard, our family are distinguished.

"But even this has attained no habitual or positive influence over my mind. It diffuses

rather a shade than a gloom: its effect has been like that of twilight, whose shadows inspire a dubious and grateful awe—not midnight, that peoples its dark recesses with shapes of fear. The result of my deliberations has been what, perhaps, it would have been if I had not deliberated at all—to gratify the simple and original impulse of curiosity, by a pursuit of which I vainly flatter myself the object is higher. I determined to make Michelo conclude his narrative; I determined to visit the tomb of Count Orazio at night. I need not tell you I accepted Michelo's offer to accompany me without reluctance. He has a knowledge of private passages in the castle, which may be useful in eluding observation. 'Signor,' said he, 'the passages we must traverse lead near those apartments so long shut up, the apartments of your late uncle and his countess. You must permit me, as we pass them, to shut my eyes; do you, signor, lead me, and as we draw near them, speak cheerfully, and let me feel your hand on mine.'

"I consented to his conditions. The watch night has arrived; the family are at rest, and I am in the turret, awaiting the arrival of Michelo. Ippolito! what is there in that nature and state, to which our better part aspires, that the belief of its agency is thus awful, that the thought of its visible approach or presence is scarcely supportable? I have no definite apprehension of what I may meet or see, but there is a busy and alarmed motion within me, as if something of evil impended, whose magnitude was too extensive, or whose features were too terrible even for expectation. I feel, at least, that its contemplation leaves room for no other object, though it is thus indefinite and vague itself. I have brought books; I cannot read them. I have commenced several trains of thought: I have started from them all, imagining I was in the vault. In spite of my resolution, I feel my respiration grow short, and a sensation like swelling oppressing my throat. I will walk up and down my narrow apartment. It will not do..... my steps seem limited to a certain track, beyond which I almost feared to extend them, and their echo was too loud. The hour is approaching—a few moments more, and the castle bell will toll. The hour that I have longed for, I almost begin now to wish more distant. I almost dread to hear the steps of Michelo..... Hark! the bell tolls—the old turret seems to rock to its echo; and the silence that succeeds, how deep, how stilly!—would I could hear an owl scream across me! Ha! 'twas the lightning that gleamed across me. I will go to the casement; the roar of the elements will be welcome at such a moment as this..... The night is dark and unruly—the wind bursts in strong and fitful blasts against the casement. The clouds are hurried along in scattering masses. There is a murmur from the forests below, that in a lighter hour I could trust fancy to listen to; but, in my present mood, I dare not follow her wanderings. Would my old guide were come! I feel that any state of fear is supportable, accompanied by the sight or sound of a human being..... Was that shriek fancy?—again, again—impossible! Hark! there is a tumult in the castle—lights and voices beneath the turret..... What is this they tell me?"

CHAPTER IV.

"—— Nec mens mihi, nec color
Certa sede manet, humor et in genas
Furtim labitur, arguens
Quam lentis penitus macerer ignibus."—HORACE.

"My reason in confusion flies,
And on my cheek th' uncertain colour dies;
While the down-stealing tear betrays
The lingering flame that on my vitals preys."—DRYDEN.

From the messenger who brought this letter no further intelligence could be obtained. While Ippolito read it, the visionary spirit kindled within him, and he wished himself at the castle, to feast his fancy wi h the dark imagery of spectred terrors; while Annibal's mind, differently constructed, was employed in resisting suspected imposition, and submitting with stubborn reluctance to the influence that thus in crutably overcame him. But Ippolito's curiosity was now as much occupied by his young domestic as his brother's was by his old one. Amused by the strange circumstances of his introduction, Ippolito had assigned him an apartment near his own, and exempted him from every office of servitude. This was indeed a gratuitous indulgence, for had Cyprian, as he called himself, actually dropped from the sphere of another planet, he could scarce have been more ignorant of everything relative to this. Ippolito perceived it, and resigned him to his own pursuits.

The form of Cyprian was slight and delicate, a profusion of chesnut hair shaded his cheeks, and deepened the dark tint of melancholy thought that sat for ever on his face. His head was seldom raised from a declining posture; his features seldom varied their pensive expression, but when they did, their sudden and eager brightness of intelligence bespoke a mind of suppressed energies, and habitual dejection. Though voluntarily assuming a station of servitude, he possessed all the refinement of manner and acquirement that mark the higher ranks of society. Seated at the harp or organ, Cyprian poured through his delicate, half-open lips, a stream of sound more resembling respiration than tones modulated by art and practice: they were the very sighs of music; while his fingers, sinking into the strings, seemed almost to partake living sensibility, and forget the power of motion at the cadence. As a painter, his merit was distinguished, but in all he did nothing appeared laboured, nothing even finished; he seemed to possess the genius of art, apparently without its rules or its labours; and over all was spread a species of fragility, a certain delicacy of imperfection, that characterized the desultory efforts of a mind which only required stability to arrive at perfection. But it was soon discovered that neither as a painter nor a musician did he remit that influence which he claimed for higher offices. He entered on his office of monitor to Ippolito, with a spirit and power that actually seemed given him from above. Ippolito listened with surprise, but it was surprise which the gentleness of the pleader disarmed of anger, and into which his eloquence infused admiration.

Turning into jest, however, a conflict with a boy, he collected the powers of sophistry and declamation he was too well accustomed to wield, and imagined that a few sentences of rapid brilliancy would overwhelm the poor little pleader at once. But this meretricious array was displayed before Cyprian in vain; simple, earnest, sincere, he pursued his florid opponent with the eloquence of a man, and the fervency of an angel. He was neither dazzled by verbiage nor disconcerted by subtlety, and Ippolito's pride summoned him in vain to the cause which his conscience deserted. The conclusion of the debate proved that it was not for victory the young disputant had engaged; he proceeded with tenfold earnestness to press the practical consequences of his concessions on Ippolito. Such was his ingenuous pride, that what he could not defend he dared not practice, and a boy caught the promise of reformation from a blushing libertine. But a more difficult task yet remained—to direct the choice of life while it was yet suspended, and to effect a transition from one mode and habitude to another; yet to conceal the interruption, and prevent the intermediate wanderings of vacancy. At this moment, therefore, Cyprian displayed all his resources—painting, and harmony, and poetry; and over all his taste spread a charm, chaste and mellow, like that of moonlight on a landscape, till Ippolito was delighted by the conscious expansion of latent powers, which he mistook for the acquisition of new ones; and Cyprian succeeded in recalling to the forgotten pleasures of nature and of taste a mind fevered by the noxious stimulants of artificial voluptuousness. But minds thus habituated are not easily weaned from periodical indulgence, and when the night arrived, not all the taste or talents of Cyprian could prevent the chronic fit of vacancy. When they failed, even the pensiveness of the little monitor would yield to his solicitude for his pupil; in the graceful petulance of airy command, he would wind his slender arms around Ippolito, and with female blandishments, declare he should not quit the palace—blandishments to which he bowed with the pouting smile of yielding reluctance.

They loved to wander amid the scenery of the shore, to gaze on the last rich day-streak of purple, on the landscape melting into shade, and flattering the eye with a thousand mixed and visionary forms. The sea pouring forth an expanse of infinite brightness, dotted with dark skiffs and galleys, the moles and promontories stretching their narrow lines into the sea, and terminating in watch-towers, whose summits still retained the sun-light; and to the north-east, Vesuvius, filling the view with masses of bold, tumultuous darkness. They lingered and listened to the stilly sounds of evening, the flow of the sea-breeze, the ripple of the tide, the hoarse voices of the seamen, and the lighter tones of peasants, who were dancing in groups on the shore, and mingled with, though distinct from, all that hum of ceaseless sound which a populous city sends forth at night, forming together a kind of animal music, which soothed, if it did not elevate They lingered till Ippolito's mind, "not touched but rapt," suggested to Cyprian an opportunity for the object of his never-ending solicitude.

He spoke of earthly things in all their excellency and beauty, being but as a veil spread before the fulness of impassable perfection, to which we are not to look, but through them; he spoke of the dissolution of earthly things as but the withdrawing of a veil, when that which it concealed shall break upon us in all its glorious beauty, filling our renewed faculties with a fulness of joy, "such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard."

Ippolito listened, and was "almost persuaded to be a Christian."

CHAPTER V.

"Cum subito e sylvis, macie confecta suprema
Ignoti nova forma viri, miserandaque cultû
Procedit."—VIRGIL.

"When from the woods there bolts before our sight,
Somewhat betwixt a mortal and a sprite,
So thin, so ghastly, meagre, and so wan,
So bare of flesh, he scarce resembled man."—DRYDEN.

SECOND LETTER FROM ANNIBAL.

"My last conclusion was abrupt; I broke off in expectation of something important; I was disappointed; the cries I heard were uttered by a servant, who, passing near the chapel, saw, or imagined he saw, something that terrified him almost to death. I listened to his story—I will listen to such no more; they unhinge and dissipate the powers which I would wish to concentrate and to fortify. I have a dark, inward intimation that I shall be called to something which will require no common energies of thought and action. The only circumstance of this man's fear worth relating, was, that when he recovered his senses he demanded to be led to my father, and requested his confessor to attend. My father, with a facility that astonished me, consented; but the monk was nowhere to be found. My father then seemed to recollect something that disturbed him, and was dismissing the man, when from the small door of his oratory the monk issued, and stood among us. His appearance just at this juncture, his gaunt and sallow visage, the knots of his discipline stained with blood, the loose, dark drapery of his habit which, as he stood in the shade, gave a kind of floating obscurity to his form, combined to make an impression on me I do not like to recall. On the man who had desired to see him it was terrible; he again became insensible, and was conveyed from the apartment. I found Michelo had taken advantage of the confusion this incident had produced, to defeat my intention of visiting the chapel that night; an intention of which it would be difficult to tell whether the late circumstances had increased or diminished the force. Have I mentioned the confessor to you before, Ippolito? If I have not, let me do it now; he is a strange being. He was originally an ecclesiastic of the Greek communion, the errors of which he renounced, and shortly after entered into a convent in the neighbourhood of Naples, the superior of which recommended him as a person of uncommon sanctity and unction. To this was added the reputation of his strict and almost supernatural austerity—qualifications still more welcome to our gloomy father.

"I never saw a form and air more unearthly, a whole appearance more remote from the beings or business of this world, than this man's, whose name is Father Raffaello Schemoli. In his large fixed eye all human fire appears to be dead; his face is marked with the traces of past rather than the expression of present passions or events; it seems like the bed of a torrent that has flowed away, but whose violence may yet be traced in its deep, dry, unlevelled furrows. The very few who have seen or known this man speak of him with a kind of obscure fear. He is, indeed, an object for superstition or fancy to scare themselves with. Even to my mind he often has borne the aspect of those beings who are said to hold communion with both worlds, who are permitted to mock us with a semblance of human shape and intercourse, while they are doing their dark offices in other elements than ours. I am ashamed to write thus superstitiously of him, but I would you could see him. For three following days Michelo shrunk from me; at length I met him in the west corridor, and without waiting for a reply, which I was determined to disregard, I told him I would visit his turret that night, and quitted him. But on my repairing to his chamber at night, what was my astonishment when he tenaciously refused to conclude the narrative of my uncle's disappearance. I entreated and expostulated: he was silent. I again threatened him with my father's interference; he shook his head emphatically:—'Interference in this business,' said he, 'my lord is not likely

to use; he already knows all that can be told, and perhaps is not solicitous that all should be known to you.' Incensed, I intimated violent means. 'Violence can do nothing but destroy,' said he; 'and what pleasure can there be in sending with pain an old man to the grave but a few days before he would sink into it tranquilly?' To this pathetic obstinacy of the old man what could be replied? Yet still I continued to importune him, till casting a searching glance round the chamber, and rising, he grasped my hands for a moment, and whispered, 'Signor, I am forbid.' I believe he meant to convey the impression which I at once received from these words. that the influence which constrained him was more than human; still my solicitude was resistless, more resistless for this dark intimation, and I pursued the subject in the hope of leading him, by vague and indirect questions, to unfold it. 'Have my uncle and his countess been long dead?'—'Their tombs have stood in the old chapel now eighteen years.'—'This is evasive, Michelo; your knowledge must be positive.'—'Is it then possible to know the living from the dead?' said he wildly. 'There are some who go in and out, and walk amongst us as living things, over whom has long been laid many a good weight of earth and stone, but—' (checking himself) 'for the Count Orazio, peace to his bones, they never rested in the chapel of his ancestors.'—'Explain, Michelo.'—'Yes, signor, for that I can tell. Shortly after the report of the late countess's death—' 'The countess, then, is dead.'—'Pardon me, signor, I only mentioned the report of her death: I was returning from a journey (on which I had been sent by your father), and on approaching the castle by night, I saw the chapel illuminated, and heard the chant of many voices chanting the requiem; I hastened forward, and learnt from some of the attendants that my lord had died abroad, and that they were now interring the remains, which had been brought over by Ascanio. I was at first stupified at the shock of such a desolation. The countess, the children, my lord, within a few months! I recovered a little; I wandered into the chapel—the service was over; the monks and attendants were dispersing; most of the torches were extinguished; nothing was heard but the low, faint beat of the last bell. I approached the bier, they had descended into the vault to prepare for its reception. I was alone, and longed for a last look of my master's face. As I bowed over the bier I thought the pall moved. I retreated, but returned, and with a quivering hand withdrew it. There was neither shroud nor cerecloth. I examined it with astonishment; there was no corse, nor anything belonging to a corse, within; the bier was overspread with pall and vestment only. I replaced them; I heard the steps of attendants ascending from the vaults, I retired.'—In vain I pressed Michelo for conjectures on this extraordinary circumstance; at length he said—'Sometimes I think, signor, that if he be indeed dead, they have laid him in some remote and unhallowed place, and the poor wanderer comes here to seek rest among his ancestors, but cannot obtain it.' A long pause followed this melancholy and unsatisfying solution. I recollected that these circumstances must, when they occurred, have caused some amazement, and I asked, had no doubts been suggested, no inquiries been made, had society slept over these marvels?

"Michelo appeared to enter on his narrative with fear. 'Shortly after these circumstances,' said he, 'my lord, your father, retired to his estates in Apulia, where you, and most of your family, were born. I still resided in this castle, from which I brought my accounts to your father in his Apulian residence. About ten years ago I set out on such a journey in the close of autumn. As I was obliged to cross the Apulian mountains, I took care to provide me a host in that wild country, who, as is the custom there, shifted his hut and flocks, according to the vicissitudes of the seasons. I expected to find him among the woody recesses of the mountains, but after wasting the evening in search of him, I at length directed my mule to the foot of the mountains, in hopes of meeting some other hut in which to pass the night. In the first I saw a large company of peasants were assembled round a blazing wood-fire; I joined them, and perceived my old host among them; he was relating a marvellous tale, to which I listened among the rest. It was wild and strange; it told of something that had been lately seen on the mountains, the terror of which had driven them together into the valley; what it was I could not comprehend; some described it as a good, some as an evil spirit; some said it was a human creature like themselves, and some affirmed, that it pursued and scared travellers out of their senses, to drag them to its den, and prey on their bodies. In this discourse the night passed on, and when the flagons were dry, and the embers low, we stretched ourselves on skins and leaves around it, to sleep.

"'The strange tales I had heard kept me for some time awake, and as the dying fire threw its red gleams around the hut, I almost fancied I saw shapes quivering in its light. At length, however, I commended my soul to the patron saint of the mountain, and tried to rest. I heard a gentle noise at the door of the hut, as if the latch were raised and let down again; I immediately roused, and just leaned up on one elbow; my head was full of what I had just heard, and I watched the door silently. In a few moments the door opened, and something appeared at it, which, after a pause, entered the hut. When I beheld it, I conjectured at once it was the shape that was seen on the mountain. It was indeed ghastly and horrible, and as it moved, all by the dusky ember-light, surely it seemed like something that had strayed from its prison-house of pain: I know not whether it was from curiosity, or the very extremity of my fear, but I disturbed no one, and it seemed to disregard me. At length it drew near the fire, and began a low muttering sound, accompanied with strange gestures; and I, who began to fear it was busied in some witchery, dreaded that the hut and its inhabitants would in a moment be wafted into the air. However, after some time, it rose, and tottered out again; but after that, all the long night, as the blast came strong and loud from the mountains, such dolorous sounds were scattered on it as I could scarce think were uttered by a human voice. The next morning I concluded my journey.'—'And did no consequence or explanation follow all this?'—'Whenever after that I went into Apulia, signor, I was sure to hear the same tales repeated. It was about two years after that, passing over the mountains, I reached, about the close of evening, a woody defile, thick and dark, with ash, and elm, and chesnut. As I entered it, I thought I heard a voice call on me; the sound was like no sound ever heard or uttered before. I turned, and saw approaching from behind the very figure I had beheld in the woodland hut; my mule stopped—it approached, and uttered a sound that I thought resembled my name. It was dismal; around me were the thick trees, and the light dimly appearing above their tops. I tried to rush into the wood, but my mule would not move. I stood trembling and crossing myself, and now it came nearer, and now it was close to me. It spake; but the sounds were wilder than the howl of wolves. Its language was all mows and chatterings, yet still it held me, and still seemed anxious for conference; I spoke, I know not what, in a pacifying tone, and I perceived, as my fear diminished, it became articulate. It spake at length in a kind of strange rhyme, which, though I did not understand, I cannot forget: among other things it said—

'There is another of us here,
And we two dwell alone;
The raven that meets us back doth fly,
And the she-wolf looketh ghastly
When she sees us by the moon.'

I now acquired some courage, and spoke to it rationally, but it interrupted me—

'And wilt thou on my errand go,
Nor baffle me with mock and mow—
Like the foul things, whose nightly nest
Is in the cranny of my breast?
A fiery gush is in my throat,
And drowns confession's struggling note—
They bind me strong with darkling spell,
And what I wish I may not tell—
And oft I bid on errand go
The leaf that falls, the gales that blow.
'Tis in the roar of dark brown flood—
'Tis in the moon of wintry wood
And every form that nature wears
Blairs it in burnish'd characters.
And still no eye the tale can read,
And still no tongue doth trump the deed—
Still, till my ghastly tale is told,
I scream a-night on wood and wold.'

When it had ceased, it released me, and I sprung onward. But in a moment afterwards it crossed me, and all the livelong night it beset me. Sometimes it would catch my mule's bridle, and stare me in the face; anon it would be seen playing its goblin gambols among the branches of the trees, from which it would drop down beneath my feet, and then, with a wild cry, bound away into the woods. I arrived, spent and breathless, at a hamlet in the wood, and——'—'But how can this contribute to the explanation of any events that may have happened at the castle?'—'Pardon the prolixity of an old man, signor; if I do not tell events in the order they occurred to me, I shall be unable to relate them at all. It is not long now since I sojourned for the last time with my old host in the valley; I saw, when I entered, he was bursting with strange intelligence, nor did I wait long for his information. 'Two nights ago,' said he, 'we heard a knocking at the wicket of the hut; we were too much afraid of the vampire to open it; however, when the door was opened in the morning, it was found extended before it, without sense or motion. When it was brought in and revived, we

began to mistrust that it was a human creature; and when it was recovered, it addressed us in christian accents, and, just like a christian man, besought us for shelter and blessed charity, and talked like one that was recovering from a long trance, and beginning to feel human feelings about his heart again. All that day he was faint and feeble, but still spoke in christian accents, but towards night we somehow began to feel uneasy again, not knowing what evil thing it might be; and fearful of some unknown mischief, we made a great fire, and sat round it all night, telling our beads, and watching as it lay; it started and groaned often, but made no other movements all night. Towards morning it was still weaker, and it besought them, for the love of the Virgin, to send for some pious man, and have the offices of christian charity and grace done by it. They sent with all speed for a holy monk to a monastery in the mountains, and when he came, he started at the sight of such an object; but on conversing with him, and receiving clear and pious answers, he prepared to receive his confession, and administer the last rites. The peasant and his family left the hut, and the monk and the dying man were left alone: they were shut up that day and evening, and when the old man returned, he was struck with terror at what he beheld. The penitent had scarce a moment to live, and the confessor appeared nearly in the same state. He held out the crucifix with a trembling hand to the dying man, and the moment the breath left the body he fainted. While they were using means for his recovery he uttered some extraordinary words, which they believed referred to some terrible secret the confession had disclosed. When he recovered, he immediately prepared to return to the monastery, but a storm arose that rendered it impossible for him to proceed. The monk was in an agony of solicitude; he stalked about the hut, and peeped from the casement, and at length demanded if the old peasant could supply him with materials for writing: 'For if,' said he, 'the smallest particle of what I am to attest should escape, the consequences might be visited on me hereafter.' The materials were procured, the monk sat down and wrote all night, often crossing himself, and dropping his pen, and then again compelling himself to proceed. At length, when he had finished his writing, he set out to return to the monastery; 'and we,' said the old man, 'are preparing to follow him with the body for interment.' I inquired, was the body still under his roof, and hastened to the room where it was laid. I approached it in curiosity and fear, for I remembered our encounter in the forest, when no power on earth could have persuaded me the being I saw was human. I bent over it: the distortion of filth, and famine, and madness, was on the countenance no longer. I viewed it—I could not credit my eyes; again I looked on it and again; it was indeed the figure I had beheld in the wood, and that figure, signor, was—Ascanio.'—'How, Michelo—who?—the confidential servant whom you mentioned in your former narrative?'—'The same, signor: in my late visits to Apulia, I had indeed observed Ascanio's absence, and heard the strange conjectures of the domestics.'—'But then, Michelo, the monk and the secret subject of the confession—did nothing ever transpire? are these intricacies to be without solution, and without end?'—'Peace be with the souls of the departed!' said Michelo, crossing himself. 'Strange means, it is said, were resorted to to suppress that story. Shortly after my return to the castle, there was a kind of report, that the monk was in possession of some secret, dark and terrible, relating to the family of Montorio: it became an affair of public consternation and solicitude. The whole territory of Naples had their eyes fixed on the supposed movements of the monastery; it was said they were preparing to divulge something to high authority, and that the monk who confessed the dying wanderer was to have an audience of the Pope himself; others said, that he had never been himself since the confession, and that the subject of it had been communicated to the prior, who was to assume the conduct of the affair. At length it was certain that the monk set out on a journey, with numerous attendants; that he seemed greatly agitated; that he travelled with extraordinary expedition; that he was often heard to say (though in perfect health), he never would live to conclude the journey; and that, after arriving at an obscure inn on the road to Rome, he could be traced no further: there was much inquiry and commotion about it. The host and his family were lodged in the Inquisition, and several in the neighbouring village apprehended, and vast rewards offered for the smallest intelligence of the monk, or of the documents that were supposed to be in his possession when he disappeared. The prior of the convent, supported, it was said, by the enemies of the family of Montorio, pursued the search with all the zeal and tenacity of an inquisitor; but the grave kept its secrets well. Thus, signor, the last remaining pos-

sibility of any intelligence relative to those events was removed, and thus we remain in ignorance and fear.'

"What passed through my mind a moment after he ceased to speak, I will not dare to breathe even to you, Ippolito; if you can discover it from the question I asked, you may.'—'My father, was he much shocked at these events?'—'He was much shocked at these events,' said the old man, as if fearful of using any words but mine.—'Perhaps,' said I, 'his present gloomy dejection is owing to their preying on him still.'—'I firmly believe,' said Michelo, 'they continue to prey on him still.'—There was a dreary pause; the bell tolled three.—'Tis late, signor; we have wasted many hours in this melancholy conference: permit me to see you to your chamber.' I rose almost unconsciously; the sound of what I had heard was yet in my ears, nor did it quit them after I retired to rest."

CHAPTER VI.

"——— Attonitusque legis
Terral frugiferai."

It was not extraordinary that, on Ippolito, these letters should produce an effect merely slight and partial. His mind was not constructed to receive the impressions Annibal wanted to convey. That some strange obscurity had gathered over the fate of the late count and his countess, was plain from every part of the narrative; yet Ippolito, innocent and noble of mind, perused the letters, not with suspicion, but with curiosity; and in the avidity with which he read a narrative of wonders, the observation (relative to his father's concern in those transactions) which had been suggested to the dark penetration of Annibal, was totally overlooked by his brother. His two predominant passions, love of the marvellous and love of heroic adventure, inspired him with the thought that some dark act of oppression or violence had been committed, the unfolding of which was reserved for him; and, as he thought of relieving distress, or of vindicating virtue, his cheek glowed, and his frame mantled and dilated with generous enthusiasm. He was roused from his trance of heroism by Cyprian, who invited him to their evening excursion. Ippolito, who was in that state of mind which is pleased with itself and its purposes, complied; and the smile which, as he assented, lit up his beautiful countenance, gave it almost an angel brightness and benignity. From such an expression in Ippolito's face Cyprian was always observed to turn away abruptly and tremblingly. When that face was partially averted, he would view it with such a fixedness as if his very mind was eye: when it was turned towards him with no marked expression, he would venture timidly to look up; but when Ippolito smiled, Cyprian shrunk from him with a sick and miserable delight, which was equally difficult to describe or account for.

They set out. It was one of those evenings of which it is difficult for one, not conversant with Italian scenery and climate, to imagine the beauty. There was a blaze of animated but tranquil loveliness diffused over earth, and sea, and sky; there was a splendour which did not dazzle, a richness which did not satiate; there was not a cloud in heaven, not a dark spot on earth; the eye wandered over an extent of view, which its brightness made seem immeasurable, and rested on it with a fulness of complacency. The west, that presented a broad sweep of golden light; the sea, that chequered the reflection by the heaving of its waters and the gliding of its vessels; the wooded windings of the shore, and the promontories clothed in their most verdurous and lovely hues—endless variety of shape and shade, from the dark brown tufts to the feathery spray that quivered in the breeze, and admitted the blue sky through its fibres; the spires and palaces, whose glowing western fronts shone like jaspar and topaz in the setting sun—all these objects seemed to produce a kind of visible harmony, as sensible to sight as the mingled accordance of sounds to the ear.

They ascended a path they knew, which conducted them to a recess, where, shadowed by the arbutus and the magnolia, they sat and surveyed the prospect.

After a silent pause, "Tell me," said Cyprian, "what is necessary to form a poet, but to be conversant amid such scenery as this?"—"Many things more are necessary," said Ippolito; "labour, and art, and study, and knowledge, which must be supplied by experience, by observation on the mixed forms of artificial life, and by those hereditary habits of association, both of sentiment and language, which must be acquired by an intimacy with the works of similar authors. He who exposes himself merely to the impressions of nature, will indeed

acquire a sensibility of them; but it will be a savage and solitary feeling, which cannot be embellished from want of internal cultivation, and cannot be communicated from want of the aids and colourings of appropriate language."—"Pardon me," said Cyprian, "your own observation seems favourable to me: you mention habits of hereditary association derived from one poet to another; that this is true I admit; and if it be true, it must follow that the first representations were distinguished by their fidelity and excellence. Now the early poets must have copied from nature solely, for society was in a crude and elementary state, and of previous models the first artists can have had none."

"When I mentioned the early poets," said Ippolito, "I did not mean the aborigines of Parnassus, the bards of savage tribes, as savage as they whose effusions were oral and traditionary —I meant the poets of an age cultivated, but not so cultivated as our own. Nature must, indeed, be the object of poetical representation, but it must be nature modified and conformed to the existing habits and taste of society."

"Were I a poet," said Cyprian, "I should invert your rule, and admit the influence of prevailing manners into my strains, so far as they were conformable to nature. From that species called pastoral, for instance, I would banish that trim and fantastic garniture which removes it from everything with which the observation or fancy has ever held alliance. Shepherds laying aside all concern for the simple objects and pleasures of a pastoral life, to pursue their mistresses with speeches, which to them ought to be unaffecting and unintelligible, expending a portion of time which rural life can seldom spare, to talk of pains and pleasures, which even refinement feigns to feel, and which here, therefore, divest fiction of all imposing resemblance to truth. All this I would exchange for the true and visible imagery of rural life: for the little peasant boy chasing the firefly, or feeding the silkworm, slumbering in the shade at noon, or led, in pursuit of some wanderer of the flock, to a scene of unexplored wildness, treading with rude awe where his steps are not echoed by human sound, and gazing on views which no eye, save the eye of the lone genius of the place, had ever before beheld, or touched with local and rural superstition, trembling in moonlight or in storm, amid ruins, deemed the resort of beings not of this earth. Or, if shepherds must be in love, I would represent them loving like shepherds, with simple fidelity, with unfastidious jealousy, with services such as pastoral life may require and receive, and with hopes of rustic enjoyment, such as labour may require and simplicity relish. I am sure an assemblage of such imagery would give pleasure to those who love nature; and those who do not, might find at operas and carnivals shepherds and shepherdesses sufficiently courtly and unnatural."

"You should study the poesy of the heretic English, as a penance for your own poetical heterodoxy," said Ippolito, "though perhaps the task would have little of penance in it. I have been acquainted some time with the chaplain of the English embassy; he is reckoned a man of literature in his own country; and were he not a heretic, I should think him a man of sense and probity. He tells me that (from the surly independence of the national spirit, from the roughness of the climate, or from a taste derived from their ancestry) there is a spirit in their poesy, quite different from that of the continental; a simple appeal to the strong and common feelings of our nature, often made in such language as the speakers of common life clothe their conceptions in. Of this he describes the effect to be inconceivable by a reader accustomed to the poetry of Italy. From their dramas and poems remote and heroic adventures are almost banished, and they turn with more emotion to the indigent peasant, weeping over her famishing babes; to the maniac, who shrieks on the nightly waste; to age, pining in lonely misery; to honest toil, crushed in the sore and fruitless struggle with oppression and adversity, than to the raving princess or declaiming hero. They have also a species of poesy among them (unknown, I believe, to any but the northern nations of Europe), which contributes to maintain this taste; the traditionary tales of their ancestry, the rude chronicles of a bold and warlike people, of which the language is wild and peculiar even to the ears of its admirers, from a kind of quaint and antique rhythm, which irresistibly associated in the minds of the hearers with the thoughts of times long past, with melancholy and awe-breathing remembrances. These are the ballads of the west and north of Europe; they are set to a simple and monotonous melody, and chanted with enthusiasm.

"There is a nation of people wild and little known, in a western island, whose national poetry is still richer, and whose harmony is said to be more melting than that of the English;

I have forgot their name; but of a people so endowed the name will not be always obscure. The little poem I am about to read to you, relates the actions of a rude chieftain of that country.

BRUNO-LIN, THE IRISH OUTLAW.*

A.D. 1302.

Bruno-Lin awoke in the night,
He griped his mace, and he roused his might,
He deemed it long till his followers all
With food and plunder filled his hall.

His followers food and plunder sought
From warded tower to hurdled cot—
A land of blood—they raised the spear,
And never a foeman stood anear.—
A land of blood—they laid them down,
And there was not a meal for four miles round.

Where saintly peace at Melikt dwells,
They burst the convent's seared cells;
And broke the pix at altar's base,
And flung the wine in the sacristan's face.

He griped his mace with a grimly smile,
(Hard to lift, and heavy to feel,
Banded with brass, and studded with steel,)
The moon shone through a rift the while—
He griped it, and swore by Mary's might,
To go and meet the traveller-wight.

Bruno-Lin he left his tower
All in the mirk and midnight hour,
Through mossy bog and matted briar,
He sprung with the speed of fairy fire,
Nor rested till his firm step stood
Where fordet dispart the the wandering flood.
O'er Shannon's broad and bridgeless stream,
Was passage else nor far nor near—
Though buttress'd arch, and shadowy pier,
In its dark blue wave now frequent gleam.

He leaned with his mace on the red moss-stone,
And watched for the step of traveller lone.
Was not a sound to stir the ear—
Was not a form that thought could fear—
The owlet slept in tufted nest;
The river's ripplings whispered—rest.
The ear might list till murmurs still
Of unheard sound the sense did fill.
The eye might gaze till forms of night
'Gan quiver in the misty sight.

The breathless calm of the lone hour
Held o'er his soul unwonted power:
Bruno cursed the stilly night,
And waved his mace to wake his might;
He would rather hear the tempest rave,
And shout to the toss of the crested wave.

A step—he lurks behind the stone:
A step—he comes—the traveller lone—

It was a knight of moody mien,
His hand unglaived, his lance in rest;
His barbed steed scarce felt the rein,
His footing stint the stirrup press'd.
Thrice as his step the brink assay'd,
A voice of woe did sweep the stream;
And thrice beneath the moon's wan beam
A bloody stain the waves embayed.

Bruno rushed from his trysting place,
And dashed in the courser's front his mace—
In bone and brain the iron stood,
Reek'd to its base both spike and stud—

The mad steed bounding with the pain
Rose like a meteor in the air,
Left in sore plight his rider there,
And plunged into the flood amain.

Bruno rushed on the struggling wight,
And bore him to the earth outright:
On ringing plate, and riven mail,
The massive mace did bound like hail.
He cannot rise, he cannot breathe—
His lance is locked, his sword in sheathe;
From gash and rent the life-blood flows,
And faint and short his struggling grows;
His quivering head, and stark-swoln breast
The chase of hunted life confess'd—
"Lay me on Melik's holy shore!"
His last prayer sped—he breathes no more.

Three paces backward Bruno strode,
And on the corse did sometime gaze;
Then in his arms assayed to raise,
And felt it was a dead man's load.
He rent the mail from his bleeding breast,
He rent the gems from his plumed crest:
The shield from his left arm unwreathed,
And half the burnished brand unsheathed;
But he would not the visor's band unbrace,
For he cared not to look on the dead man's face;
He heaps the spoil on the red moss-stone,
And lists for the step of traveller lone.

He comes—a lone and lowly wight,
Scant was his speed—and vilde his plight;
He is y'douned in dusky weeds,
And loud, as he goes, he tells his beads.
Bruno 'sdeigned this enemy
With craft or weaponed might assail,
Or melt in perilous battaile:
So forth he strode, and bade him "die."
"For Christ's bless'd mother spare my blood!
I do not plead for craven life;
'Tis for a soul's most precious strife;
By Him who died on holy rood.

"Warrior—I held a wide domain,
Iron portals fenced my keep,
Mailed warders watched my sleep;
Warrior—I led a hardy train.
This hand, that marshalled my bold crew
In the fell foray of the Pale,
Armed with glaive of iron scale,
This hand an only brother slew!

"Oh, what shall give a murderer rest!
Still, still I feel the worm within,
Still burns the unquenched fire for sin—
And I have roamed from east to west.
Full fifty choirs their requiems raise;
On fifty shrines the tapers blaze;
Them fifty priests do watch by night,
With missal chant and taper'd rite;
O'er flourished cross, and trophied tomb,
His banner waves in warlike gloom,
And bells shall toll—till day of doom.
Oh, what shall give the murderer rest!
I feel th' undying worm within,
Still burns the unquenched fire for sin,
And I have roamed from east to west.

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* The subject of the following lines was taken from a note on a poem, from which it is an honour to borrow a hint, however slight or remote. It is, perhaps, the only merit of this trifle that it was suggested on reading a passage in 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel.' It is lamented that the scenery of this ballad is so topical, that whoever has not been in Ireland can scarce read it with pleasure; whoever has, will not be sorry to think again of the ruins of Melik, and the waters of the Shannon. Bruno-Lin, or Bryan-o-Lin, as he is sometimes called, is a chieftain still famous in the memory of Irish song.

† Melik, an abbey, whose beautiful ruins are yet extant on the banks of the Shannon, where it flows between Galway and Leinster.

‡ Fords of Melik.

" Aid from each sainted name I crave,
From cloistered tower to eremite's cave;
To stone and well I ceaseless wend,
At cross and cairn my head I bend;
I've knelt and wept from morn to morn,
My knees are stone, mine eyes are horn—
All vain of penanced lore, the rede
Rite, and relic, and charmed bead,
And vigil pale, and pilgrim weed.

" And now with faltering step I go—
These costly gifts shall Melik gain,
To the last rood of my domain—
(The dark fiend doth beset me so,)
Peace to the parted soul to win
Or free the living soul from sin.
Warrior—for grace thy weapon sheathe,
So may thy last prayer gracious be,
So may thy soul part peacefully,
So may it triumph gloriously;
Nor plunge a soul unblem'd in death."

Bruno scarce marked his woful tale;
Small was his wreck of penance—rede
Scant was his ruth of saintly weed;
" Pilgrim, a shorter shrift shall 'vail,
If without book thou knowest a prayer,
Address thee, for thy corse lies there."
Sore strove the man in agony!

But Bruno wrenched him without tail
Like tufted weed from mossy soil,
And plunged him in the darksome waste,
And still his death-cry swell'd the blast;
" Might I but reach the shadowed spire,
Within its shadow but expire——"
Till the dark waters quench'd his cry.
Then Bruno from his scrip 'gan pour
Pix, and chalice, and taper high,
And rood, and altar's imagery,
And vase, and vest for sacristy,
Of monkish wealth, a goodly store.

He heaped them on the mossy stone—
'Vails not to tell how many a wight
Bowed beneath his mace that night;
'Vails not to tell how rich foray,
With dint of perilous assay,
Was won that night from traveller lone.

Bruno homeward now doth wend,
His prey around him heavy hung;
Beneath a part his shoulders bend,
Part in his mantle broad he flung,
And some was tied to his mace's end.
Home he wends with footsteps wight,
The moss beneath his backward tread,
Scant bow'd his lithe and limber head;
When lo - a meteor flames his tower,
Bright as the beam from fairy bower
When wanderers—mark o'er wat'ry strath,
How burns the elfin's taper'd path—
So shone that bright and wondrous light.

Swift he comes—his followers all
With feast and foray had filled his hall.
There was note of boasting loud,
Pointing to prey, and stanching of blood,
Till Bruno check'd the wassail rude.
His eye was lit with high disdain,
As he threw the prede upon the ground
And leant on his mace with idless stound,
All while his followers gazed it round:
Then sudden, with a startled mien,—

" Who lapped our keep in nightly fire?
On towery ridge of castled wall,
Bartizan and beacon-spire,
Casement arch, and arrow loop,
And grated cleft and chink withal;
A flood of sheeny flame did tower—
When, as I entered, all was mirk."
None the cause could rede, I trow,
Much they mus'd and murmur'd low.

" The lonely taper that lights our hall
Gleams in a crevice of the wall;
Not broader seen than Melik's spire,
O'er Shannon's far and moonlight wave."
But soon they started from moody stound,
And as they bask round ruddy fire,
Gibe and jest, in gamesome sort,
With the wide wassail cup went round—
When hark!—when hark!—
A blow upon the barred door!
The band each drew his unwiped dirk,
Indrew with quivering lip his breath,
And starting, grasped the board unseath,
And glanced around the hollow eye.
When louder, as of iron stave,
On boss and bar, the smiting rung—
The boldest of the rover's train
Pressed on his lip his wary hand,
Seized with shorten'd gripe his brand,
And went—but ne'er returned again.

Loud and more loud the smiting grew,
As bar and bolt in splinters flew;
Another goes—his mazed feere
With ear that faltered on the sound,
Listened, as down the stair he wound;
But thence nor voice nor step could hear—
Loud and more loud the smiting grew—
Others still, and others went—
Bruno sat in his lonely selle—
He heard his band, as one by one
They trod the winding stair of stone;
Adown the footing, hard and dank,
He heard their sandals' iron clank:
He heard them reach the arched door,
But thence nor step nor voice heard more.

Was nigh him now nor friend nor feere—
Lonely thought his heart 'gan quell,
His proud eye 'vailed its hardiment;
And slow he rose, as now through mist
Of umber'd arch the door mote see,
He sign'd the cross, which he deemed a spell,
And faltered a broken Ave Marie.
Untouched, the door far backwards flew—
What shapes are they—through mist and fog
Now dimly seen, now sudden lost,
That lap in flame the fenny bog,
And distant now, and now anear,
Edge the dark lining of the cloud,
Sweep in dim march the heathy hill,
And now below in darkling dell,
Mantle the tootted and matted briar
With ridgy head, and spiky hand,
Talon and fang, of fringed fire—
All instantly and visibly!

Shapes, now sheeted in paly fire,
That shimmer like the moonshine frost,
Now ambound in flaky gyre
Of eddying flame, whose high career
Whirls them round with waftage loud—
While through its bickering volumes still,
Fitful gleam'd the shadowings blue,
In umbered skull, or flamy eyne,
Like steely studs in morion dun,
Or tombed tapers sapphire sheen,
Or carbuncle in ebony.——

The sight was drear—but Bruno bold
Had deemed it but some pageant strange,
Play'd by the quaint and antic sprites
Through fog and fen that darkling range,
Till 'mid the ghostly rout he knew
The shadowed forms of those he slew.

Stern scowl'd the knight—his rifted mail
Disclosed his body gashed and bare:
Wan gleamed the penitent so pale,
And signed a shadowy cross in air;
And far, far off in cloudy sail
Other and sadder shapes were there.
Forward—the ghasted murderer fled,
Mid horror's pith to plunge his head.

Even in that dread and darkling hour,
His soul's first impulse urged its power.
Forward—his thoughts unbidden tend;
Forward—his steps unconscious bend.
While as he turned his scared eye,
He sees athwart the reddening sky
The spectre-cloud in folding fires
Enwrap his castle's smouldering spires—
Giant-shapes of warlike sheen
Grasping what seemed dart and spear;
And sulphurous lightning's streamy lance,
O'er crested tower their wild forms rear,
And mouths of other than earthly mould
(Gleaming through the casements barr'd,
Or o'er the portal battle scarred)
Through ebon horns rung war-notes bold—
And every hue and tint so pale
Shone out in that unearthly light;
Shadowy stole and form of mist,
Flar'd like the sunny chrysolite,
Ruby or opal's argent mail,
And emerald, and amethyst.

Onward the ghasted murderer rushed,
Till Shannon's dark wave checked his flight;
Onward the fiery fabric urged,
And as he turned with hurrying tread,
Still seemed to topple o'er his head,
Still vollying, on the sulphured gale
Came shriek, and gibber, and ghost-like wail,
Like stripes, his flying steps that scourg'd.

The river's depths lay dark in night—
And his broad surface, still and clear,
Gave back no gleam of unbless'd light.
He paused a moment in breathless fear—
Then with a cry (whose nightly yell
Oft sweeps its stream, as legends tell),
He plung'd beneath—the winds are whist—
The echoes sleep—and all is hush'd.

"I confess," said Cyprian, "in these I find a pleasure which I seek in vain amid the sententious and cold *concetti* of our poetry. Would I were one of the Arcadi, or of those whose eminence in the literary world enables them to extend their influence to the arts!"—"Why should you wish for that influence, and how would you employ it?" said Ippolito.—"I should wish for it," replied Cyprian, "because the connexion between literature and the arts is intimate and inseparable; I would therefore make each the channel of reciprocal improvement to the other. How much more striking would the effect be, if, instead of the stiff figures of our drama, coming forward in modern habiliments to warble modern music, contrasting instead of representing the classic or romantic characters whose names they usurp, the bard of those distant days and regions you have described, should appear with the rude and flowing drapery, the harp of bold unmeasured song, the themes of old and wondrous story, and all amid scenes suited to his character; not among the glare of artificial lights and picturings, but amid rocks and ruins, the murmurs of waters, and the tremblings of moonlight. I have mentioned only one character, but might there not be a thousand others, and all with the appropriate melody of their age and nation, simple, or rude, and wild, as they might be, but all rendered more interesting, by remembered and heart-touching association, than the most scientific strains uttered by modern harmonists?"

"And how would you contrive," said Ippolito, "to extend a similar improvement to the department of painting?"

"Oh!" said Cyprian, "that mute language whose powers I am convinced are yet unexplored, that language now only intelligible to the eye, I would teach to speak to the very soul. Instead of copying the colouring of one artist, the design of another, the trees, and the sunlight, and the ruins, that are handed down from age to age, with mechanical improvement and imitation that excludes originality, I would have the painter look around life, and within himself; I would have him copy from nature in a state of motion, from existing life; from those forms and shades of manner and feeling, which are in a perpetual state of animated fluctuation around us, more numerous, more varied, and more vivid than they could have been, from the unimproved state of society, in the time of the elder masters. I would make all my figures characters, and all my groups circumstantial and narrative. But for sensible representation, it is better to furnish example than argument. I saw a painting by an obscure master; the subject was common, it was the interment of a corse, it was the moment after the vault was closed. From the devices I conjectured it was the burial of a young person, and from the countenance of an old man (who assumed no particular attitude) I was convinced it was his only child. Over the face of the priest was spread a chaste and holy sadness, such as men may be supposed to feel, to whom the fixed hope of a better life have made the inflictions of this of light and trivial avail. But the wretched parent was bowing to the priest for having performed the last rites, was thanking him, with the humility of courteous misery, for having for ever removed from him his last earthly stay and hope. There was something in the expression of the old man, thus trying to work features, convulsed with anguish, into a gentle smile, to blend the duties of the moment with the wrung feelings of the parent, and not forget the decencies of grief, amid its stings and bitterness; I cannot express myself, but I looked at the other contents of the gallery with sufficient tranquillity. Such are the subjects I

would introduce or search for in every effort of mind or of taste; and to every subject, mental or artificial, I would attach its appropriate features of scenery and character."

"And with the present scene what group would you associate?" said Ippolito. Cyprian paused. "What if I were to take the pencil from you, and become an artist in your new school? I feel the inspiration coming. Let me try. Shall I sketch a little friendly, monitory sylph, soliciting with gentle art a giddy, graceless wanderer, from a vitiated sensibility of pleasure, and recalling him to those pure and innocent enjoyments which he blushes to have forsaken so long?"

"Oh, my master, my beloved master," said Cyprian, "look forth, and wonder that you ever forsook them. This dim light, that veils from us the forms and colours of the earth, gives to the sky a dense and sombrous majesty, which I love better than the bright blue of noon, or even the amber glow of sunset. See the high arch of heaven above our heads, how vast, how spacious—without a star and without a cloud. There is something in its aspect of calm stability and immutable duration. It stands in its strength, and its silence tells of eternity."

"And see far off, just over Capri," said Ippolito, "where the sky is of a paler blue, one little twinkling star of silver fire, and above it the moon, with her slant crescent, slowly coming up. Does she not seem like a bark of pearl floating on the deep, dark, blue ocean? And see, while we speak, ten thousand stars are bursting into brightness. There is my natal Saturn, just where I point; how wan he looks to-night. Oh, for a mental telescope, to read the characters inscribed on that dark speck." He mused, and Cyprian observed with anguish the change on his countenance. "Observe," said he, recovering himself, "in this deep silence of the night, the distinctness of the most faint and distant sound. Listen to that bell from the city; I think I could tell the very convent from which it sounds. How solemn it swells on the air; it is a death-bell."

"Peace to the parting soul. Oh, it gazes on this scene with other eyes," said Cyprian, crossing himself.

"Yes, in a moment, how changed its views, its capacities, its range of existence and motion," said Ippolito, "from the dark, narrow bed of suffering, where all of nature that was admitted was the sickly light that struggled with the watch-taper—in a moment, to see with a spirit's bright and boundless view all nature, with her worlds and her systems, her laws, her causes, and her motions; yea, and the mighty Mover himself—oh, wonderful."

"And thither shall we follow, though not now; we shall be there in a space, which, to the duration of that world, is as a moment," said Cyprian, "and be assured that these cool and healthful moments of reposing thought, snatched from the fevering turmoils of the world, will have an effect that shall not be unfelt or forgotten there. There the best hours of our lives are numbered and valued; and the best of our hours, I believe, are passed amid the stillness of nature and the silence of thought."

They descended, and returned to Naples

CHAPTER VII.

The influence which, in these conferences, Cyprian had obtained over the mind of Ippolito, was singular and powerful. The obscurity of his introduction, the peculiarity of his manners, gave even a hovering shade of awe to impressions, of which the character had been otherwise faint and fugitive. Not of a sex to inspire love, and still too female-like for the solid feelings of manly friendship, Cyprian hovered round his master, like his guardian sylph, with the officiousness of unwearied zeal, and the delight of communicated purity.

On their return to Naples, Cyprian observed that a length of time elapsed before Ippolito joined him, though they had quitted the carriage together, and when he did appear that his aspect was strange and altered. It wore an expression of ghastly wonder; his lips were white, and his eye vacant; he addressed abrupt inquiries to the servants, with the air of a man who wishes to satisfy his curiosity without betraying the object of it; but from them he learned nothing. They "had seen no shape," they "had heard no sound;" and Ippolito's inquiries seemed suddenly checked by something more than the difficulty of satisfying them. Shortly after, Ippolito retired to dress for an assembly, and Cyprian to his closet, where, in

his master's absence, he was constantly employed in writing, and where (some whom the prying habits of an Italian servant had induced to watch him, declared that) he gave himself up to emotions so terrible, they wondered so delicate a frame could support them.

When Montorio returned, his valet was summoned to attend him alone. His cabinet was contiguous to Cyprian's, who, obeying an impulse which his concern for his master justified to himself, listened at a partition, in a state of solicitous feeling, which the low, broken sounds that issued at intervals through it, irritated, instead of appeasing: at times the words "strange"—"fearful"—"terrible"—and every expression of painful wonder, met his ear. Some observation was then made by the servant, of a tendency apparently palliative or explanatory, to which Ippolito answered with solemnity, "Impossible! If I have life and sense I saw it—three times to-night—distinct and terrible."

A sentence followed from the servant, which, partly from the stretch of most painful attention and partly from the answer, Cyprian conjectured to be an inquiry about some form or shape. It was followed by some imperfect answer from Ippolito, but of which Cyprian could not discover whether the imperfection arose from the form being too obscure or too horrible for description.

The conference ceased, and Cyprian had scarce time to sit down to his papers, which he turned over with shaking hands and a vacant eye, when Montorio entered the room. He stalked about for some time gloomily, then, like one who wakens slowly from an oppressive dream, he gazed around him, and sighed heavily. Cyprian, who wished to ascribe to himself the uneasiness that prevailed, lest he should irritate a disturbed spirit, said timidly, "I have been writing since you told me of the English poetry, and this has been the cause of all this foolish embarrassment; I was anxious and ashamed to show it to you." He held out a paper, which Ippolito took with a listless hand, and while he read it Cyprian watched his countenance with an emotion the fate of his poetry did not excite.

THE LADY AND HER PAGE.

It was a sweet and gentle hour,
  'Twas the night of a summer day,
When a lady bright, on her palfrey white,
  Paced across the moorland grey.

And oft she checked her palfrey's rein,
  As if she heard footsteps behind,
'Twas her heart of fear that deceived her ear,
  And she heard but the passing wind.

There trips a page that lady beside,
  To guide the silken rein,
And he holds up there, with duteous care,
  Her foot-cloth's sweeping train.

And that page was a knight, who in menial plight,
  For love of that stately dame,
Long served at her board, though a high-born lord,
  And a foe to her father's name.

Across the haze there streamed a pale blaze,
  And the page's cheek blanched with fear;
"Oh, see, lady, see!—at the foot of yon tree,
  The blue fire that burns so clear.

"'Tis the prince of the night, 'tis the elfin sprite,
  With his ghostly revelry;
Sweet lady, stand, with this cross in thine hand,
  Or thou and I must die.

"For, as legends tell, an unseen spell
  Doth screen him from mortal wound,
Unless the steel he dipped in a well
  That holy wall doth bound."

Sad was her heart when she saw her page part,
  And she feared she would see him no more,
For in secret long her soul was wrung
  With a love that ne'er trembled before.

Oh! what is the sound seems to come from the ground,
  And now sweeps along on the air?—
She dared not to look, for with terror she shook,
  And she tremblingly murmured a prayer.

And o'er the dun heath a balmy breath
  Stole like roses and violets sweet,
And the lavender blue, all dropping with dew,
  Strewed the ground at that lady's feet.

"Fair maiden, come to our twilight home,
  Where we'll sport so merrily;
The glow-worm by night shall lend us her light,
  As we dance round the grey ash-tree.

"Or with unwet wings we'll sport in the springs
  That roll far beneath the sea;
Or to the bright moon we'll fly as soon,
  If my love thou wilt deign to be."

Askance she gazed, and her eyes she raised—
  A youth stood timidly nigh,
And of a truth, 'twas as lovely a youth
  As ever met maiden's eye.

His tresses brown, that came mantling down,
  Seemed his snowy neck to veil;
And with chrysolite eyes, his wings' crimson dyes
  Were starred like the peacock-tail.

His eye was bright as the north-streamers' light,
  But his cheek was sad and pale;
And the lines of care that were written there,
  A spirit might read and wail.

But his sky-tinctured vest to his eyelids was pressed,
  And his heart seemed bursting with woe,
And the white, white rose that wreathed his brows,
  Seemed pale and paler to grow.

"I've watched thee late and early,
  I've watched thee night and day;
I've loved thee, lady, dearly,
  With a love that can never decay.

"I've heard thy sleeping sigh, lady,
  I've heard thy waking prayer;
No mortal foot was nigh, lady,
  But I was weeping there.

"With an eye that no thought can deceive, lady,
I've seen love sweetly stealing on thee;
I know that young bosom can heave, lady,
And shall it not heave for me?"

The lady stood—and her unchilled blood
Gave her lip its warmest hue;
But the cross to her breast was fervently pressed,
And still her heart was true.

"Yet rest thee here, oh, lady dear!
And my minstrel spirits gay,
With harp and lute, and fairy flute,
Shall play thee a roundelay."

All was hushed and still on the elfin hill,
All was hushed in the evening vale.
Not a whisper was heard, not a footstep stirred,
Not an aspen-leaf shook in the gale.

Then, soft and slow, a note of woe
Came far on the breathless air;
'Twas wild as the strain of the mermaid train,
When they're combing their yellow hair.

'Twas wild as the dirge that floats on the surge,
The mariner's lonely grave;
All while mortals sleep, they sing and they weep,
And they glide on the moonlight wave.

Then it rose rich and high, like the chant of joy,
That breathes round the hermit bower;
When cherubim bright leave their mansions of joy,
To soothe his dying hour.

Oh! how the heart beat, of that lady sweet,
But her heart did not beat with fear,
The strain so wild her senses had guiled.
And she loved though she trembled to hear.

But who is he that flies, with his soul in his eyes,
Wide waving a falchion of steel!—
By the flush on her cheek, ere a word she could speak,
A nursling babe might tell.

('Twas an urchin sprite, in the guise of her knight,
'Twas a wile of the elfin king,
And the vision so quaint, in form and in teint,
Her soul to her cheek did bring.)

"Hushed, hushed be your fear, for your true knight is here,
With the brand that his patron saint gave;
No elfin wight may dare its might,
For 'tis dipped in St Angelo's wave.

"And the cowled friar, and convent quire,
Are waiting our nuptials to say;
Haste, lady, haste, for the night's fading fast,
And the eastern cloud is grey.

"But give me the cross that's hid in thy breast,
And give me the rosary too,
And I'll lead thee o'er the perilous moor,
On the faith of a knight so true."

Oh, she gave up the cross that was hid in her breast,
And she gave up the rosary too—
As he grasped them he frowned, and he smote the ground,
And out rushed the elfin crew.

And the goblin rout gave a maddening shout,
And danced round them in many a wild ring,
And the slender waist of that lady chaste
Was clasped by the elfin king.

All loose was her hair, and her bosom was bare,
And his eye it glared fierce and bold,
And her wan lip he pressed, and her shuddering breast,
And he grasped her locks of gold.

But instant a blow made the caitiff forego,
His gripe of that victim fair,
And deadly he groaned, as he shrunk from the wound,
And phantom crew vanished in air.

"I've saved thee, my love, by help from above,
I've saved thee from mortal harms;"
And no word she spoke, but she gave him a look,
And sunk in her true knight's arms.*

Ippolito, though he perused these lines with the apathy of one occupied by other thoughts, still seemed anxious to escape from them by tenaciously seeking employment. He snatched up the papers that lay before Cyprian, and vehemently began to peruse them. Cyprian, all agitation, rose, and besought him to restore them. "They are not to be read."—"You increase my anxiety to examine a composition that is written not to be read," said Ippolito, with a languid smile.—"They must not be read by you; to you they can afford no pleasure; they are a simple tale of woman's love, and we men believe that women cannot love; it is a tale not to be told in an hour of levity, or when an intercourse with the light, cold characters of the world has hardened the heart, and made it slow to believe that there are beings who only live to feel, and who have died of feeling. Choose some other hour, and bring with you another heart. I shall make no demands of outrageous sympathy, for I know that the subject is removed too far from the world's line and topic of feeling to expect it. Nor do I think that real suffering ever sought relief but in the patience of unanswering belief. This is all I would ask, but this I fear I would ask in vain at such an hour from you."

"Cyprian," said Montorio, touched by his words, "the frivolity in which you see me immersed, is artificial and irksome; I have a heart capable of passion, but the object capable of inspiring it I yet seek in vain. It is but a little while since I entered society, with feelings ardent in youth and exalted by hope; those feelings are repelled, crushed, almost extinguished. I submit to a pitiful compromise with the depraved system of society; I trifle with the trifiers of the day, and languish even for the refreshing hope of imaginary excellence. All who are beautiful, I can admire; her only who can love, can I love." He clasped his hands, and threw up his dark, ardent eye to heaven, and stood with the look and energy of inspiration.

"If such a being ever existed," said Cyprian, "there is her history."—"And is she yet alive?" said Ippolito—"and is she to be found?"

"No! she lives no more; she has passed away, as few have perished, without note, and

* This poem was communicated by a friend.

without remembrance. All that loves to cling round the image and memory of the dead, has forsaken her; she perished without a tear, without a memorial, without a grave.

"This is a narrative of thoughts, not of circumstances—no ear heard, and no eye saw her sufferings; and never did the subject of her sole thought enter into the thought of another. It is necessary, before I begin to read these fragments, to mention to you that the writer was young in years and in sentiment, the very child of simplicity and enthusiasm; an union not impossible in young minds. She entered into the world, she was surrounded, dazzled, and confused. but her feelings expanded, as the eye becomes accustomed to the glare of recent light. In the tumult of new pleasures she saw an object, on whom she gazed with the smile of new-born love; it was her last, last smile. He was indifferent, because he was unconscious: she never told her love, till its posthumous disclosure was no longer a crime in a vestal."

Ippolito prepared to listen, though it was now late, for every object combined to soften him to attention; the chaste and mellowed light, the quiet apartment, whose floating perfumes just stirred the sense, the soothing pensiveness of Cyprian, who concealed his face with his hand, and who reads with the voice of one who fears to trust his own emotions as he reads. "The first fragment," said he, "describes her feelings on the sight of this object.

"April 1st.—It is midnight—all is silent around me—not a breeze, not a murmur, above, below. And I, amid this stillness of nature, how and what am I?—What is this feverish tumult of mind and sense that contrasts and deepens the silence around me? Whom have I seen? I know not; let me not speak his name; I will not think who he is; I am most happy. My feelings dwell in silence on their inward treasure. The gladness within me is still and balmy, like the morning sun of a vernal day. There is no being blest as I am this night, except him; he must be happy, he is so beautiful.....How is a tmuuit so wild, a calm so deep, as I feel to-night, reconcileable? My spirits are agitated, but my mind is still.....

"April 7th.—The costly dulness, the cold faces, the heavy feasts of supercilious grandeur—all are vanished—all that is tedious has ceased to be felt. What matters it where I am, when he is with me everywhere? A single spell of thought, an unuttered wish, a moving of the mental lips, brings him to my mind. There is a precious store of pleasant thought which we love to dwell on in solitude, without communication and without suspicion. This with me is the thought of him.———

"There comes to me amid crowds a mental and audible whisper of his name. I think of him, and happiness steals over me like the silent perfume of evening; like music trembling ever a length of moon-lit waters.

"April 9th.—For hours to-day have I sat, without the consciousness of thought, yet without vacancy; his image fills up the mind as if by fascination. Many passed me; I heard their steps, without feeling their presence.—Is not this like love?—Impossible: a vestal cannot love; no, my happiness is unmixed with a lover's misery; no restlessness, no jealousy, no torture of impossible hope, no anguish of disappointment. No; I may indulge these dreams without danger and without fear, for I cannot love;—it is not of his beauty I think, 'tis of himself; yet I remember well his heavenly form, his sunny cheek, and the ringlets of his brown, brown hair; yet I do not think of them; I need not; they are before me for ever.

"April 20th.—Whence is this new wish to mingle in the world? Can it be a wish to see him again? Why should I see him? Those who have watched the showery scintillation of the meteor, and gazed upon the glorious vision with uplift hands and eyes, do not wait for its return; why should I waste away life in gazing? I have no other hope. What am I doing? Where have I wandered? hope and he—It is sometimes dangerous to think of danger.

"April 30th.—I think too much of him; what I once thought impossible, is certain; I think of him too much. And must I lose that cherished thought—that charm, whose silent agency opens a glimpse of mental fairy land? Who would rob the poor hermit of his only treasure, the lovely face of his Madonna, that only smiling face he is ever permitted to see, and to which he turns in the hours of solitude and vacancy, with devotion animated, not extinguished?

"Such I had hoped his image had been to me in the vigils of the dark hour, in the loneliness of my cell—and must I resign it?———".

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At this moment several servants entered, with each of whom Ippolito successively whispered; and, after listening with much perturbation to their answers, he rushed from the palace, to which he did not return till late the following evening.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Gaudet imagine rerum."
"Rejoices in the pictured forms of past events."

The Castle di Muralto, the residence of the Montorio family, was totally unlike the modern mansions of the Italian nobility. Very few vestiges of Gothic architecture yet remain on the Continent in a tenanted state.

The style of their palaces is marked by elegance, lightness, and novelty. Their polished structures are composed of marble, mingled with materials which are reckoned precious in more northern climes; they are beautified with all the orders and ornaments of architecture, and present images the most remote from gloom and solemnity. The castle had been built in the time of the Norman kings of Sicily: it possessed all the rude and massive characters of that age, darkened by the injuries of time, and the gloom of antiquity. The ramparts, like piles of rock, the deep length of windowless wall, the turretted and embattled angles, the narrow-arched doors crested with the defaced arms of the house and its alliances, some bearing the pedestals, and some the remains of the gigantic statues that once frowned over them, and whose huge fragments obstructed the approach of those their hoary grandeur invited to examine them;—all these seemed to realize the descriptions of Gothic romance, and fill the mind with melancholy awe and wild solemnity. It stood on an eminence of the rich Campagna, near the foot of the mountain; and amid a country luxuriant with cultivation, and sparkling with palaces, the castle reared its scathed and warlike front; seeming to enjoy a sullen repose from the wounds of war and time, and to tell the grandeur of those ages that beheld it in its strength. Such was the castle, of which it was necessary to tell thus much, to give clearness to circumstances which would appear obscure and strange, if related to have passed within the walls of a modern palace. A few days brought another letter from Annibal.

"——————— I had before apprised Michelo of my intention to visit the apartments so long shut up. He had again recourse to dissuasives; but contradictory dissuasives defeat themselves, and I was only confirmed in my pursuit by his telling me at one time it would lead to no discovery, and at another, that the discoveries I should make would prove a source of lasting inquietude. I was vexed that the old man should thus treat me like a child, who was only seeking to gratify a childish propensity, and could be diverted from it by childish arguments.

"I entered on a vindication of my motives, and as the sudden flash of zeal often discovers what was concealed from ourselves, I involuntarily detected an earnestness and solemnity in my purposes, of which I had not hitherto been conscious. I desired him to consider me not as gratifying a vague and puerile impulse, but as pursuing a definite object, of obscure but real importance—and, if real, demanding all the zeal, the energy, and the capacity of the most powerful mind.

"'If my presages are just, Michelo, I shall enjoy the highest honour allowed to man, that of confirming the evidence and fulfilling the purposes of divine interposition; and if they are not, I shall at least relieve myself from doubts and fears that are becoming intolerable; I shall probably detect and punish fraud, and certainly possess a resource against future imposition.'

"As I said this, I turned my eyes on Michelo—but his countenance was unaltered. I have indeed no reason to suspect him. I now declared my intention to visit the apartments that evening, and inquired whether he would be able to procure their keys? 'I have kept those keys for many years, signor; I enjoyed in my youth extensive trust under your uncle; and still there are some employments which my lord your father would not willingly trust to others, and which I am therefore still permitted to discharge.'

"Michelo, I find, is one who tortures his hearers by perpetual allusions to secrets, of which nothing more than the hints are ever suffered to escape him; who awakens expectation to a

painful state of suspended existence, and leaves it there gasping and unsatisfied; and this not so much from malevolence, or casual indiscretion detecting itself, as from a perpetual struggle between a mind pressed with a burthen too great for its powers (and therefore anxious to relieve itself by communication), and the monitions of conscience which tell it is not right, or of fear, which whispers it is not safe to disclose it.

"I have therefore become accustomed to his manner, and forborne to importune him. In the dusk of the evening he promised to attend me. But by the beauty of two succeeding evenings, my father was induced to order ices and refreshments to the pavilion of the fountain; we were obliged to attend him. There, amid the indulgence of every wish and every sense; music and fragrance, flowers and feasting; perspectives through the foliage lattices, of luxuriant gardens, warm with the brilliant amber of sunset, which played on the limits of the view, in a quivering flood of indefinite brightness; of waters and woods, among which distant melody floated, breathing a low and dying note, so sweet, it seemed caught and echoed by the shells of listening spirits. Amid such scenes we sat in sombrous state, the mute, sad libellers of nature and enjoyment, more like statues that decked the feast, than human beings, partaking its pleasantness.

"The third evening I awaited Michelo in my apartment, and he arrived at the appointed hour. It was the dusky stillness of twilight; all was tranquil in the castle, and the grey light that came paler through the casements, seemed to promise quiet and obscurity. We passed hastily through the vaulted cloisters that lead to the lower stories of the tower; and then opening a door, that led to a long passage, we seemed to enter on a new region of the castle. Here all signs of life and habitation seemed to cease; the walls appeared never to have enclosed a human habitant. The very echoes had a strange hollowness, as if they were for the first time awakened by the tread of a human foot. We reached another door, which seemed intended never to open; Michelo applied one of several keys which he now produced, and I was obliged to assist him with my utmost strength before it yielded. I now discovered the foot of a staircase which wound beyond the sight, and on the balustrade of which Michelo paused to take breath. I ascended the stairs; they were dark and narrow, and conducted us to a door, which required our united strength again to open. Michelo, who had exhausted his in the effort, feebly staggered onward, when it yielded, and sunk into a seat. I followed, gazing round me; it was a spacious apartment, apparently heaped with faded furniture, but of which nothing could be distinctly seen, for the light that broke through the dismantled casements, and torn tapestries of the windows, could only discover its size. Michelo falteringly withdrew the drapery that obscured one of the windows. I now looked around the apartment; the decay appeared to proceed more from neglect than from age; everything was covered, and almost consumed by dust; all the furniture of a sumptuous chamber was there. The bed stood under a canopy, dark and defaced, but still retaining its draperies, its pillars, and its plumage. 'This was the bridal apartment of the Count Orazio,' said Michelo; 'here the countess passed most of her melancholy life; and here ——' he turned away.

"I inquired why these apartments had been shut up, and why the costly furniture that might decorate the most modern apartments, was here suffered to decay in obscurity. 'They would perhaps have revived painful recollections, said Michelo, falteringly; 'when my lord, therefore, returned to his castle, I received orders to remove hither the furniture of those gay apartments, and then to close these doors for ever, an order which I lament I have been tempted to infringe.' Again filled with wonder, which the circumstances of the place and these dark suggestions inspired, I renewed my importunities to Michelo to finish the tale he had begun in the turret-chamber.

"He heard me with increasing anguish of perplexity, but with unyielding resolution. His eye wandered round the apartment, as if he dreaded that even the broken and unmeaning words he uttered were overheard: — 'I cannot, I dare not; you know not how I am straitened,' (he wrung his hands, and whispered in the struggling tones of misery)— 'a strong arm is stretched out upon me; it deals with me darkly, but feelingly; no, I cannot, I dare not. An impulse of inquiry struck me that moment, which I indulged, though I could not account for.— 'Michelo, is this mysterious silence connected in its cause, or its object, with the confessor Schemoli?' I shall never forget the look which he assumed at this question; his coun-

tenance expressed the most exquisite pain, as if for danger I had incurred by the question, while rising on his feeble feet, and pressing his whole hand on his lips, he conveyed in the strongest manner by his attitude the dread of being overheard, though, where we were, it was impossible for human listeners to penetrate. I was so confounded by his aspect, that I forbore to renew my question, and a long pause followed. 'Do you wish to see the other apartments, signor?' said he. I followed him with that sullen silence with which we comply with the proposal of one who has recently disappointed us, and from whom we wish, in our spleen, to conceal that the remainder of his information has interested us. We entered the other apartment. When I write these words, I pause in thought; I recollect how important in the account of life that moment will be, and I wonder that even unconsciously I approached it with so little emotion. This apartment was like the other, dark and decayed. The light that streamed through dim disceloured windows, the last faint ray of evening, accorded well with the objects it disclosed; the silent mouldering of decay, the dusky stillness of desolation, and the old pensioner of memory, pointing with withered hand to the images that supplied her morbid and melancholy pleasures.

"He proceeded to display the pictures: the first was that of the Count Orazio. I think the painter to whom he sat must have trembled to raise his eye to him; he must have felt as the prophet did, when he beheld steadfastly the countenance of Hazael, and foretold the sufferings of his country. It was one of those faces which tells the character at a look; the bold, thoughtful front, the dark brows that almost met, the strong curve, and prominent lines of the nose, the proud curl of the upper lip, of which even the smile seemed to hold alliance with contempt, the rich, dark, sanguine complexion, which seems to be the shade the stronger passions love. From such a character I would expect the fiercest bursts of passion; the proudest sternness of heroism; soarings of superhuman virtue, or sallies of outrageous depravity; the impassive brightness of an angel, or the potent and glaring malignity of a fiend.

"Michelo supported this picture with an averted eye, and as he replaced it, shook in every limb. 'And this,' said he, displaying another, 'is the portrait of the Countess Erminia: when I look on that picture, twenty years seem to pass away, and I feel as I did when I first saw her. Such she was with that gay air of careless loveliness; yet even then there were some who spoke of a melancholy, a dejection that they said was discoverable through all her beauty and splendour. I could not see it—she was so lovely, that, to me, she ever appeared to smile.' He continued to speak, I believe; I heard him not, yet the murmur of his praise dwelt on my ear, as something that accorded with my own feelings, and that was pleasant, though not distinct to me. I remained in the mute trance of admiration; I knelt without a breath, without a sound, almost without a thought, before that picture. It was the first time I had ever beheld beauty, ever knew what was love: I will not call beauty that assemblage of colours to which the cold eye of judgment gives the praise of harmony, and quits it; no—it is the communication of unknown pleasure; it is the discovery of that unexplored chord of mind, which is touched for the first time by the hand of harmony; it is the realizing those forms which float in the morning's dream in the musings of twilight; it is the picture of Erminia. In a space which appears as a moment, I had experienced every emotion that accompanies the varied character of passion; the delicious anguish, the painful joy, the fear sweeter than hope, the hope sweeter than enjoyment; the visionary existence, the pictured dream of thought, the high and superhuman tone which this passion alone gives to the feelings and the character. In a moment I had lived the whole life of a lover: it was no longer a picture before which I knelt. I was convinced the original yet existed. It seemed to me more probable that the sun should be blotted from heaven than that such a being should be permitted to quit existence, without trace and without resemblance. There was a reality in my feelings, a fixed persuasion of her certain existence, which I know not what to ascribe to, except the living loveliness of that form; brows that thought; eyes that spoke; lips that smiled—smiled mutably with living and sensible change; hair, of which, lest I should disturb the gauzy waving, I held my breath as I gazed. She stood as in her days of early happiness; the scene and attitude were sylvan; a fawn was flying from her, to which she held out her hand; mine was extended too. And her hair—it is that dark brown, whose deepening waves and tendril ringlets have a sunny and burnished brightness, that resembles the foliage of a bower, tinged with the rich varieties of autumnal light; but, oh! to play with those ringlets, to look in those

living eyes, to kiss that breathing neck. You think me mad—I may be so. Was I so when, kneeling and attesting the lovely form itself, I vowed to pursue the original through the world, to preserve my affections for her with vestal sacredness, to make life a long pilgrimage of love, and never to know peace of mind or body till I discovered and possessed her?

"Whatever may be thought of such a resolution, I, at least, experienced from it what I expected; it composed my mind; it exalted and gratified my feelings; from its bold impracticability, I actually derived an inviting omen. It seemed worthy of the dignity of my passion; it seemed to promise that no difficulties should obstruct that pursuit which had set out by daring all.

"The light was now declining fast; an hour had elapsed since I entered the cabinet; my original purpose had been utterly forgotten; but another resource was suggested to me as I was quitting it, and the thought made me bless my happy facility in designing. I took out my tablets, and before the beam that seemed to linger on her countenance, like my own gaze, had died away, I sketched a likeness with such fidelity as convinced me the original inventor of painting was love. I continued to compare it with the original, by a light which none but the quickened eye of passion could have distinguished anything by; and the sketch, so perfect at first, seemed to want a million of touches when held to the picture. I continued to add them, rather with the pleasure than the hope of amendment. But Michelo, terrified at my delay, supplicated me so earnestly not to expose us to the danger of discovery, that reluctantly, at length, I quitted the apartment. It was late when I regained my own, which I did, however, in safety and obscurity. When I was seated at my lamp, I reflected (and you probably have anticipated me) on the views with which my pursuit had commenced, and the visionary indulgence by which I had suffered them to be suspended. The being who goes forth in the doubtful confidence of a supernal summons, and the shadowy dignity of an agent of heaven; armed with all the powers of his nature, and dreading a demand for more than all; and who, when arrived, employs the hour of his trial in kneeling before a picture, and pouring out passion to an insensible representative of the dead, certainly presents no very consistent image of human resolution. While occupied in these sage thoughts, my eyes glanced on the picture in my hand, and I forgave myself. The remainder of the night was passed not in self-reproach and resolutions of future fortitude, but in finishing and colouring it. I now mix with the family, with the picture of Erminia in my bosom, and feel like one who has found a treasure, which he smiles to think those around him are ignorant of; like one who carries about him an invisible talisman against care and pain, against the apathy of unawakened feeling, and the vacancy of an unemployed life."

CHAPTER IX.

"Sed mihi vel tellus optem prius, ima dehiscat,
Vel pater omnipotens adigat me fulmine ad umbras—
Ante pudor quam te violo, aut tua jura resolvo."—VIRGIL.

"But oh, may earth her dreadful gulf display,
And, gaping, snatch me from the golden day;
May I be hurl'd by heaven's almighty sire,
Transfixed in thunder, and involved in fire,
Down to the shades of hell, from realms of light—
Ere, sacred honour, I betray thy cause
In word, or thought, or violate thy laws!"—PITT.

In this letter, romantic as it was, Ippolito discovered strong traces of real passion, such as exists under the most unexpected circumstances, and contends for its existence with difficulties which any other person would decline as impracticable. But for light subjects of thought he had now no leisure, no wish. One object, dark and bewildering, filled all his thoughts. Since the night he had betrayed so much agitation on his return from an excursion with Cyprian, he had never recovered his tranquillity. He appeared either in contemplation, or in strong mental debate; perplexity and fear were in all his movements, and these had become so irregular, as to suggest he was engaged in no ordinary pursuit. The day he usually passed alone; about midnight he quitted the palace, and passed the remainder of the night where no one followed, and none could conjecture. At this change his gayer acquaintance laughed, his friends wondered, and Cyprian wept. But silence and wonder were all the resources they had; his silence remained impenetrable. Sometimes he mingled in society, and laughed and fluttered

with the eager gaiety of one who is resolved to snatch a respite from pain; but however pleased or pleasing others, the clock striking twelve dissolved the spell. Beyond that hour, neither pleasure nor importunity could procure his stay. He rose abruptly, dismissed his servants, nor was visible till the morning, when he returned alone and slowly through the Strada di Toledo. Sometimes he admitted Cyprian, and listened to a continuation of the fragments, because he was not interrupted by demands for comment or approbation; while Cyprian, ignorant of anything that held alliance with art, read simply on, hoping that attention was included in silence, or even when he discovered negligence, compromising for the pleasure of being admitted into the presence of Ippolito.

"May 7th.—This perpetual struggle is worse than either alternative. To do all I dread to do—to see him again, were only the guilt of a moment. Would it not be better than to waste life in this misery of uncertain debate, which neither possesses the resolution of innocence, nor the enjoyments of guilt? What if I see him no more? But why not see him, ever present as he is to my thoughts? Is he not, perhaps, more seductive, more fatally lovely to the eyes of imagination than of sense? Yes, I will see him, I will gaze on him, I will discover how unlike the object of my thought, the image of this dream, he is; and then I shall cease to think of him.

"May 16th.—I have again seen him; I am yet breathless; I cannot yet look into my mind; yet let me think—yes, I have thought enough now for life. I shall think my livelong convent hours away.—Oh, he is gloriously beautiful! What thoughts hover around his image, like music streaming before the approach of aerial visitant; like the clouds of amber and rose, that invest and mingle with the form of some fine creature of the elements. In such a gay blaze of mental brightness he burst upon me. When the tints of the evening gathered round the group on the Corso, I hoped, I dared to hope, he might pass—in the obscurity he might pass without seeing me—my sigh would be unheard, my burning cheek would only be felt by me; I might see him, I might even touch him as he passed. Among the group near me, I saw a plume that overtopped the rest—it advanced—oh, the tremulous pant, the suffocating swell of expectation! I could not believe it for very excess of joy—he approached; I saw him not, nor heard him: it was all mist and darkness with me then; but I felt it was he, and I felt he was gone. His departing was like the dying away of a scented gale—rich, languid, overpowering; from that moment there was a delicious sickness in the air; there was a soft oppression at my heart; I could not speak, and had any one spoken to me, I feel I must have answered with my tears. All night have I sat, repeating to myself at long intervals, 'I have seen him.' Morning is now dawning through my chamber, yet still is evening and the Corso with me.

"May 20th.—Can I remain in this state of dotage? Yet, dare I look into my heart, he is food and rest to me; yet I say I do not love; he is thought, and dream, and vision to me; —yet I say I do not love; my prayers are offered to him; yet I do not love. Oh, whither shall I turn? I am sore beset. Let me fall into the hands of him whom I have offended, rather than that heart which has betrayed and destroyed me. What, shall I say 'I have sinned.' Must it, must it then be a sin to love?

"May 27th.—And this was love; darkly I floated on; I never felt the tide; but when the light breaks, I am on the ocean waste; alone, frozen, aghast.—Had I heard of a tale like this in the days of my innocence, how had I condemned the self-deluding, self-betrayed wretch! Oh ye who boast of virtue yet untried, who defy temptations that mercy yet has spared you! I was once pure like you; like you I was proud. But I have strayed from the fold, I have wandered in the wilderness. The servant of the Lord hath forsaken her first love, the guide of her youth, and gone after strangers.....

"June 3d.—It is neither light nor darkness with me now; I am in a mixed and twilight state: would I could sleep! Oh for a deep, still slumber, such as I slept when I dreamt I did not love! and oh for such dreams that lit that slumber—for those bright bursts of vision that had drank the meteor's light, and were the forms of heaven! They are gone———

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"They talk of going to Rome: let them carry me where they will: whence is this passiveness? He has quitted Naples; I smite my breast, but my heart continues to beat there still.

"July 7th.—What have a few, a very few months made of me! Oh, Heaven! I was so happy, it was a sin to make me miserable. I was absorbed in divine things, dead, though in the world, to the things of the world; alive only to the objects of that where I believed my heart and treasure were. Mine were the pure pleasures, the hallowed hopes, the calm corrected mind; a light that flowed from heaven shed a glad and quiet brightness around me, and I rejoiced to walk in that light. The morning awoke me to prayer; at night I paused upon the blameless day, and sunk to sleep in prayer. I reckoned that every day should be like the last, as free from guilt, as far from pain; that I should float on their equal motion, as on the wings of a cherubim, to that place of which I believed my enjoyment certain and near. Is it so short a space, and am I so lost already? Am I already this feverish, distracted, guilty being, who ventures every day a more daring length in indulgence, a length she would have trembled at the preceding one, and while she measures with miserable and reverted eye, the distance she has strayed from the path of peace, feels also that it has brought no nearer the object for which she has wandered till she has lost herself?

* * * *

"July 15th —It came to me cherub-smiling; it rose on me like the morning with her hundred hues and shapes of brightness; joy, and beauty, and splendour, all that is gay and rich in life, all that can seduce the senses and the heart, danced around it in fairy vision. I looked, and listened, and was destroyed; and this was love. In the smiles of its birth, in the cherub-dawn of young passion, who thought of groans and anguish? Yet let me acquit Heaven; from the first I trembled and I feared: I touched the cup with a faltering lip; but oh! the sweet, sweet draught!

"July 27th. And I took no warning from my distracted devotions: from my long voluptuous day-dreams: from my coldness to better thoughts. Oh! if these sufferings would make me hate their cause; if these anguished and consuming hours could make me impatient or resisting, there might be hope; but oh! not tears flowing for ages, could wash away the characters his first and single sight wrote on my heart.

"Day and night my mind seems to hang over that, with silent and helpless contemplation. Nothing rouses me, except to an impatience of disturbance. Guilty, I cling to it. Miserable, I cling to it. Self-condemned, I cling to it. I have sunk into a dull and lethargic passiveness, and the reproaches of conscience sound like the storm in the ear of sheltered dotage, vexing his deafness, but not disturbing his sluggish comforts.

"July 21.—I pray—while a lurking hope tells me my prayers will not avail. I vary their form; I seem to redouble my earnestness, while something dares to whisper me, I would recall him, did I fear they would be granted.

"I determined on some occupation for the day, to hide from myself how it is always occupied; and while I think I am engaged, a consciousness that to think of him will be its only employment, seems to mock at my efforts, and I feel it without emotion—without a wish to resist, or a fear to yield; resolutions formed with a consciousness they will not be kept—the purposes of life maintaining a faint war with its employments; tears stifled by indulgences, from which their feeble remonstrances take away pleasure, while they leave the guilt; and prayers contradicted at the moment they are offered up by the whispers of a rebel heart.

"Such am I become!—object of fatal passion—come and see what you have made me! No—come not to see me rejoice in my guilt—come not to cast away compassion on sufferings whose enumeration only gives me a strange and dreadful delight.

"July 23.—'Tis in vain; I resist no longer; I cannot live, and not be this being; or to cease to be guilty, I must cease to be. Nor dare I wish that; nor do I wish it. This misery is but too precious to me; all that I have ever tasted of pleasure should not purchase from me, love's lonely bitter, midnight tear. And dare I call this suffering? Oh, no.—No, no, his smile, his wicked, witching smile, upbraids me when I do.

"His eye is on me,—it seems to ask me, Do I complain? Strange and wondrous being, what hast thou done with me? His image comes to my soul like the moon in the night of storms. Amid the dark masses—amid the billowy ridges—amid the mixed and angry streaks; she bursts in brief and rejoicing splendour, and gilding their thwarting and fighting forms with beauty, while the vexed traveller looks up and blesses the sight for a moment.

"July 25.—And is it a crime to love? Have I changed the passion or the name? In

my childhood I loved the light of the setting sun; the gush of the twilight breeze; the pale and wandering moon; glossing with her light the fleecy fretwork of a summer sky. I said I loved them; can I not love him as I loved them; with sinless, placid, untroubled love? Is he not the work of the same hand? Were they not both formed to be loved? Is it my curse, that I must mingle guilt with the feelings which all others indulge in innocence? Can I not think of him as of them—bright, beautiful, distant, impassable? Can I not sit and gaze life away, without a wish to soar upwards? No, no. These words fall from my pen, they come not from the heart.

"The wild and lawless thought, the wish of the dream, I dare not tell myself of, teach me a vestal cannot love a human being as she loved a moonbeam in her childhood.

"July 26.—There are a thousand ebbs and flows of feeling, known only to the mind that loves, but which make me tremble every moment, lest my perturbation should discover them to others. His name I hear without emotion when any other member of his family is mentioned by it, but when applied to him, when he is talked of by the most careless speaker, my frame thrills, my eyes grow misty; ruined as I am, my mind smiles with a sad and guilty joy at that name——

"His name I scarce ever dare pronounce, my throat swells when I would breathe it; but how I delight to hear it uttered, and how many wretched pretexts of subtlety I employ to introduce a conversation that will involve the mention of him; and when it succeeds, and when his name is mentioned, do they not see how I pause and how I tremble? Alas! what if they do? Am I not beheld by an eye, to shrink from which the detection of a world would be well exchanged?

"..... My sufferings are very great; who but me has known misery without relief—who but me has known despair without hope? We deceive ourselves with sounds: when we talk of despair, we mean not that relief is impossible, but that relief is distant or doubtful.—But whither shall I turn? Is there one speck in my horizon? No, no, no. Dark and deserted, I wade through floods of desperation. I struggle without vigour. I rise without consolation. I sink without hope. In those hours of intolerable anguish, when the mind, wearied with suffering and stung to frantic energy, is driven, like the importunate widow, to knock loud and eager at the door of hope; in those hours I have said to myself, who or what shall aid me? Show me difficulties to be overcome—show me sufferings to be endured. Give me to contend with all earthly and possible things, and I will do it. What will I not do? But I am as dust in the whirlwind. I am as a leaf in the torrent that has swept away the forest. The force and current of things bear me along. To please me, the order of nature must be inverted. The Deity must change. The woman must seek the man, and be accepted. The vestal must be perjured with impunity; therefore I turn to hope, I turn to time, I turn to space, I turn to self (for to self, endless in resource and exhaustless in consolation, we turn and cling last), and all is despair, But shall I dare to say so? I have made my purchase—yes, I have sold my soul for a smile—I am betrayed with a kiss. Oh my love, my love! hast thou not asked too much? Oh, look not on me with that smile of innocent loveliness. Glance not on me that fatal, fatal eye. Move not before me with that witching form. Do not, or I shall think all, all too little. But surely thou hast asked much, my love.....

"July 27.—Of the moon—I sometimes think he gazes on it when I gaze, and then a gush of tearful pleasure fills my eye, and I wipe it away to catch the moment of simultaneous gazing. Of the breeze—I guess it is cooling him, and then I spread my parched and pallid cheek to it to taste pleasure with him.

"But my supreme delight is to breathe his name to the ear of midnight with idiot stealth; in the deep and silent hour, when the night vapour, fine as an infant's breath, stands in the air; when the leaf of the poplar and the aspen is unmoved; when there is a hissing in the ear for every stillness; then I love to lean from my casement and utter his name—once, and softly: then swift, and bright, and thronging myriads of images float in glittering play around me.

"Then the early morn, the tepid glow, the vernal birth of cherub passion, rushes on me. The first meeting—the rapturous flutter of young alarm—the expansion of a new sense—the opening burst of a world of pleasure, these are with me—his name makes them present. I am absorbed in them, I rush on with their unconscious flow. Some image of new and daring indulgence arrests me, I start, I recoil—but I only recoil to see I have gone so far. 'Tis

less impossible to go too far than to return. I hesitate—I am lost ..... when I recover I am weeping, thinking I ought to shed the tear of penitence, and feeling it is only the tear of passion.....

"July 29.—And is it a crime to love? I cannot unite the thoughts of guilt and him, when I bend over my mind, when his image smiles on me, when the gush of early pleasure fills my heart, I am no longer guilty, I am no more wretched, I am only the happy visionary who has given up life for a dream of joy.....

"Yet, sometimes I am sorely smitten with fear and perplexity. Sometimes I would give worlds to know if I am thus utterly lost, if there is no hope for one who has dared to love. I have leant from my window in the anguish of my solicitude; I have gazed on the stars walking in their brightness, I have asked them—Is there any hope? I determined to decide it by the first I should see fall to the right, and I dared to dream that He who regulates the sparrow's flight might direct the fall of the meteor for good to his waiting, trembling creature. I lingered, and there fell one to the right, and then—I felt it gave no ease to me.

"Returning through the portico this evening I met a dog, who looked wistfully at me; the mute, melancholy eye caught me, I attempted to go, he continued to gaze on me. In the importunity of my misery, I said—art thou a spirit, and hast thou a power to serve me?—I tore myself away in time to save my reason."

"And was there such sensibility?" said Ippolito, bursting out; "and was it suffered to pine to death? Was there such a heart? And was it permitted to break? Oh, thou lorn and lovely trembler; had I been the object of thy affections, strong and gentle as they were how would I have sought, how would I have soothed thee, how would I have kissed away the precious, precious tears, and looked in thy timid eye for the first beam of restored hope."

"These are but sounds of softness," said Cyprian. "Alas! what could you have done for one whom nature and society condemned?"

"Nature," said Ippolito, "is no enemy to love; and for society, I would have borne her in my arms through the world, while one remained for me; I would have resisted every person that opposed: I would have fought with every man who dared to asperse her; I would have borne her to some quiet retreat, hallowed by solitude and love; for her I would have despised and relinquished a world that could neither understand nor taste such enjoyments as ours; and in the breathing pause of quiet delight, smiling I would have asked her, had love no counterbalance for his pains?"

"Dreadful, delicious, maddening sounds," murmured Cyprian; "they had undone her; blessed be the saints, she heard them not; shame was not added to her sufferings; she died by draughts of slow and cruel poison, but not the maddening cup of feverish impurity; of love she died, but pure and penitent. Had she heard such sounds, even dying, she would have felt the racking wish, the luxurious tumult, the groan of death had been mixed with the sigh of desire; you could not have kept the sinner on earth, and you would have rent a penitent from heaven. But no, no, no; she slumbers in the dark bed; she cannot hear those sounds, her ear is as dull as the dead."

"Boy," said Ippolito, "it would have saved us both; she had not died of disappointed passion, and I had been spared many a dark and feverish hour. But I wander; I was not the object of the passion you describe."

"You, and you alone," said Cyprian, with a burst of feeling. "You she loved, and by you was she destroyed. For you she tempted the dangers of guilty pleasure; for you she dared to wish, to hope, to madden; for you she trembled, she sorrowed, and she wept; will you believe she loved, Montorio, she died for you?"—"For me! for me!" exclaimed Ippolito, while his frame quivered, and a glow of lovely shame suffused his cheeks and forehead. "Why then did she not live for me? Cyprian, you only mock my vanity."—"No," said Cyprian, who had risen, and whose whole form mantled, and was buoyed up with sudden animation, "No, I deceive you not; her spirit hovers near us, to attest the truth, to witness the avowal Hear me, Montorio; would you have loved her?"—"You but mock my credulity," said Ippolito, smiling.—"No, by her presence, by her near presence, which I feel this moment, I mock not. Answer my question; could you have loved her, Montorio?"—"Could I!" replied Ippolito, darting his eye to heaven. "If her spirit be indeed present, it is satisfied with the homage of my heart."—"It is present!" said Cyprian, eagerly, "it is present, and is

must hover near us till it be absolved."—"Enthusiast! What would you mean? what would you ask?"—"Imagine me her for a moment," said Cyprian, sinking at Ippolito's feet, and hiding his face. "Imagine me her; give me one kiss."—"Enthusiastic boy!"—"Give me but one, and her spirit shall depart, pleased and absolved."—"Visionary! you do what you will with me. I never kissed one of my own sex before; but do what you will with me." Half blushing, half pouting, he offered his red lip; Cyprian touched it, and fainted.

CHAPTER X.

LETTER FROM ANNIBAL DI MONTORIO.

"I HAVE been so tossed with doubt and distraction since I wrote to you, that I have been unable to form one sane reflection, or to divide events from the feelings that accompanied them. I deferred the continuance of my letters, therefore, in hopes of writing them at length, in calmness and in ease. The hope has been fruitless. The extraordinary circumstances in which I have been engaged have deprived me of all distinct powers of discrimination and reflection; they are so woven into my habits of thought, that I feel myself able to do little more than to describe them; and even that, not as a spectator would, and as a philosophic mind would wish to do, but with all the confused perceptions, the superstitious minuteness, and the weak amplifications of real and present fear. I know not whether you will prefer this to a more composed account or not; but if you do not, you must compound with necessity; for it is the only one my present state of mind enables me to furnish you with.

"The night was approaching on which I had determined to revisit the apartments, and to suffer Michelo to tell his tale. I remembered how I had once been overpowered by fear, and once by pleasure; and I now determined to collect every power, and confirm every resolution that could preserve me from the influence of weakness or of deception.

"I even perused some of the old legends of our library, that abound in adventures similar to mine; I endeavoured to act a personal part in the narrative, and to shun the weakness or acquire the fortitude which their various agents exhibited. I passed some time in this mental disciplining; but I find ineffectually, if its influence was to have preserved me from fear.

"As the hour approached, my wish to view the spot I was to visit so soon became irrepressible. I ventured on the terrace that leads to the tower, and I found myself under the walls of the apartment; its appearance without resembled that within, dark, lonely, and deserted. I saw a range of windows, which, from their direction, I conceived lit the long passage through which I had been conducted by Michelo. They were narrow and dismantled, and at a distance from the ground, but many cavities in the walls, together with fragments of the battlements that had fallen on the terrace, assisted me to climb to their level. I now looked round me with security: I had taken a time at which the servants were engaged in a distant part of the castle, and I enjoyed the leisure of full gratification. I looked through the window—it lit the passage, as I had imagined; the passage appeared as on the night I had visited it, damp, and dusky, and solitary; but as, by holding my face parallel to the window, I looked down its deep length, I imagined I saw a figure issuing from the wall at the other end, approaching with a slow and unsteady motion. That it was a human figure, I could only conjecture from its loose garments, of which the darkness still prevented me from distinguishing the shape or habit.

"It advanced—nor was it with a pleasant emotion that I recollected it must pass by the window at which I hung. It advanced; its head was covered; one arm was extended, and the dark drapery which hung from it shrouded the face. I was so absorbed in wonder and curiosity, that till it drew within a few paces of the window, I forgot my station would discover me; I relaxed my hold, and concealed my head under the large pediment of the window. It passed—and though I felt through the shattered casement pannels the air impelled by its approach, its steps gave no sound. I raised my head—it had passed; and I saw it floating away in the distant obscurity of the passage. I lingered long under the casement; but there was neither sound nor object. Of what I had seen, I knew not what to think; that it was not Michelo, I was certain; and no other being had means to enter those walls, except by such means as I was almost impelled to believe that form was master of. I loitered in vague and unsatisfied conjecture, till the hour at which Michelo had promised to attend me. When that

arrived, he joined me, and employing the same precautions, we reached the apartments unobserved. Michelo again paused to recover himself from fear and from haste; and I examined the apartments with more leisure, and a better light than the last evening had allowed.

"'Signor,' said Michelo, recalling me, 'I have led you hither that I might mention without interruption and without fear, what in any other part of the castle I might not safely mention, not even in my own remote turret at midnight. I came hither to shun the suspicions which I fear are already excited; those observations which I dread our frequent conferences may suggest, and which it is impossible to exercise here.' Of this position I felt not quite assured; but concealing what I had seen, desired him to procee'. My attention was at that moment excited by a strange appearance on the floor. 'Can this be the effect of the shade which these closed windows throw on the floor?' Michelo was silent. 'See where it spreads in long and dusky streaks, and ends just beside that door.'—'It is blood,' said the old man, shivering. 'Blood!' I repeated: 'this stain that overspreads half the room! impossible. To produce this there must have been a massacre, not a murder, in this apartment.'—'It is blood,' said the old man, rising and feebly following me, as I examined the traces;—'here it fell, and here splashes of it are on this wall, as if it had been forced out by violence; and at this door all appearances of it cease.' I paused; all those dispersed causes and appearances that hitherto floated vaguely on my mind, exciting only a partial and unproductive emotion of fear, or wonder, or anxiety, now rushed on it with collected force, and produced one appalling conviction. 'Here has been murder, Michelo; and you who know in whose veins this blood has flowed; you who were, perhaps, present at that hour, a witness to that deed—you preserve an obdurate silence; though, perhaps, your strange sufferings are owing to the visits of the victim; though, perhaps, it lingers near this spot, where its blood was poured, unabsolved and unrequited; though, perhaps, its shroudless form was seen to-night, wandering in the passages of this chamber.—'Pursue your path,' said the old man, with solemnity, 'whither a hand mightier than mine seems to conduct you; I can lead you but a little way; my time is brief, and my task restrained; I would willingly have followed on, but a power I may not resist withholds me.' Pursuing the traces, we had reached the other apartment—here they had ceased; but in my impatience for discovery, I again adverted to the jarring looseness of the floor, and the damp and deathlike steam that floated through it.

"I strode across the room—it shook under me: frantic with impatience, I resolved to rend the boards asunder—a task my strength would have been easily equal to, and which would probably give some relief or object to my mind, which now could scarce support its feelings, wrought up as they had been to a pitch, solemn, severe, and terrible. 'Forbear, forbear, signor,' said Michelo; 'solitary as these apartments seem, there is one who visits them. The count, your father, I have too sure proof, repairs, at the appointed time, to these chambers; oh, fear his vengeance, should he discover that other feet beside his own had trod these bloody floors—his vengeance is terrible!'—'Twice,' said I, eagerly grasping at his words, 'twice, Michelo, have you uttered these words; that they have a meaning, beyond common fear, is evident; and whatever that meaning may be, I will know it before I quit this spot: what have you known or felt of his vengeance?'—'His vengeance is terrible,' said a voice, deep and distinct, beside me. 'Again you have repeated it,' I said, for impatience had confused my perceptions. 'I spoke not—I breathed not,' said Michelo, aghast, and clinging to me; 'a voice issued from the wall: quit this spot, for holy St Gennaro's sake, quit this spot, if yet we may quit it alive.'

"I was not, like him, congealed and rendered helpless by fear; but I suffered, perhaps, more from the keenness and strength of my own perceptions. Resist it as we may, the presence or the fear of the presence of the dead, is almost intolerable. We endure it in a tale, because it is a tale; and the consciousness of fiction produces a balance with the pain of credulity. But I was oppressed by evidence that appeared irresistible, and I felt the natural fear, which I have in common with the peasant and the child, and which my improved perceptions, perhaps, magnified with many an unfelt and subtle circumstance of addition. I deliberated a moment; a gush of visionary heroism came to my mind, and I resolved to examine the flooring, when Michelo, unable to speak, grasped my arm, and pointed to the opposite wall. My eye followed his involuntarily; they rested on the figure of an armed man in the tapestry, whose bold and prominent outlines rendered it even strongly visible in that

dim light. A weapon which it held was pointed in the direction I was about to explore; the head was thrown back, and the features of a strong profile were fixed on the same direction. As I gazed on it, the large eye appeared to live; it moved; it looked at me; it turned to the spot, to which the arm pointed, and the arm vibrated with a slow and palpable motion; then all became lifeless, and discoloured, and dead as an artificial form. What I had seen and heard was enough for me. I became inflamed, impelled, exalted; a certain supernal dignity mingled with my feelings; I felt myself the summoned agent of destiny, yet not the less did I feel that I was surrounded by horrors; that I was treading where the living inhabited not; that I was called by voices nature shudders to hear. But they appeared to me the instruments by which I was appointed to work out some great purpose, and I grasped them with a convulsed but daring hand.

"I began to examine the apartment. In every part of the wainscot under it, pannels had been detached and shattered by age and neglect. But they only betrayed the solid wall. One that appeared less impaired than the rest, I examined, therefore, more closely. It resisted; but strength, such as I felt at that moment, was not easily resisted, and I soon wrenched it from the wainscot. The cloud of dust that followed was soon dispersed, and I discovered steps rugged and unequal, and feebly lit, winding within it. I addressed a few words of comfort and courage to Michelo, who leant exhausted against the wall, and prepared to descend them. He attempted feebly to dissuade me; I heard him not. The stairs, down which I attempted in vain to descend steadily, appeared, from the roughness of their formation, to have been scooped out of the wall; a discoloured light seemed to stream on them from a grating which appeared at a vast height in the roof above me. The dust that rose under every step, scarce permitted me to distinguish them; and the heavy steams I had observed in the adjacent chamber, seemed to constitute the very atmosphere of this passage.

"The steps, descending for some time, terminated in a door which no key could open, and no effort could force; and Michelo, who had now followed me, declared he knew not, nor could conjecture, from his knowledge of the castle, where that door conducted. Here all progress seemed to be suspended, and I looked around me with a desponding eye. That some secret was within my reach, I was convinced; and to lose its knowledge, after so much expectation and toil, appeared insupportable. My very exertions reproached me with my want of success. The very dull and murky stillness of the place seemed to offer mockery to my inquietude.

"Reluctantly as I returned, still examining every object, I observed a part of the wall, where there seemed a regular fracture running through the stones in nearly a square direction; I applied my hand to it, it shook under the pressure, and a large portion of detached rubbish fell at my feet. I felt inspirited; with the assistance of Michelo, I soon discovered, under a thin coat of plaster, that mouldered at the touch, a door, that had nothing else to conceal or to fasten it. I dragged it open; it discovered a dim cavity, barely wide enough to admit me. I entered it, stooping and contracted; and from its narrow dimensions (partly by feeling, and partly from the pale light the grating still afforded me), soon disoovered a kind of rude chest disjointed and ill secured. With an impatience which urged me to violence, I endeavoured to rend it open. From the loose and lumbering rattle of its contents, I had a shuddering suspicion what they were. I yet persisted; Michelo, who appeared animated by a sudden impulse of his own, endeavoured to assist me. With the feverish strength of eager weakness I succeeded. The decayed panels gave way. Ippolito, oh, Ippolito!—my hand touched the mealy and carious bones of a skeleton. The dry limbs clattered as the panels fell about; the light fell on the head as it lay, and gave a deadlier hollowness to the cavities of the mouth and eyes. Panting and pale, I staggered back; the heat of exertion and pursuit was over: I had reached a terrible point of proof; the mute and ghastly witness before me spoke. Murder hurtled in mine ears as I viewed it, yet still I was uncertain and disquieted. The crime was revealed, but the objects and agents were still unknown.

"Meanwhile I saw Michelo bend over the corpse, and examine it with attention: I saw him shudder, and clasp his hands. There is a state of mind in which we only converse by actions. I hastened to him, and, entering the den, surveyed the skeleton again. Michelo, with strong and speechless expression, pointed to one of its wasted arms; the hand had been severed from it. We looked on each other as conscious that each was brooding on his

own convictions. At length I spake, and felt myself articulate with difficulty —'Michelo, does your knowledge of past events suggest anything that might explain this spectacle? If it may, oh! forbear to wrong your own soul, and the soul of the murdered, by longer concealment.' The old man smote his breast, and crossed himself. 'I am innocent,' he murmured, 'I am innocent; but this object brings to my memory a report I had long forgotten, and which, when I had heard, I considered but as some tale which ignorance had invented, to dissolve the mystery of that terrible night. It was whispered by many, that on that night some one had been privately brought into the castle, murdered, and interred in some unknown part of it: who he was, and for what cause, or by whom he was dispatched, none pretended to tell.'

"This account, though it increased my suspicions, did not diminish my perplexity. That some unhallowed deed had been done on that night, so often referred to, seemed certain; the hand that had done it appeared shrouded from all human view or inquisition. 'Michelo, one question more, and I shall cease for ever to importune you;—do you believe this to be the body of my uncle, of Count Orazio?'—'From many circumstances, signor, I should have been led to fear this was the body of the late count; but others would seem to contradict it. But why should I wish to suggest to you that he was murdered?'

"'Here, it is said,' he continued, 'bells have tolled, and forms have moved. Sometimes long processions, with blazing lights, have been seen gliding past the windows; and sometimes a burst of voices, of no human tone, have been heard chanting the funeral chant.'

"'These are tales, Michelo, told and believed promiscuously everywhere by the vulgar and the timid.'—'Ay; but, signor, I myself have seen——' —'What have you seen?'—'Things, signor, that prevented my being much surprised at the discovery we have recently made. I have seen lights moving, and heard sounds issuing from those apartments, at a time when I knew no human cause could have produced either.'—'Were the appearances you mention similar to those that occurred in the ruined chapel?'—'Ask me no more, signor,' said the old man; 'as far, and farther than was in my power to gratify it, your curiosity has been satisfied; let us quit this dismal place.'

"His words seemed to awake me from a trance. That momentary courage which the emergency had invested me with seemed suddenly to desert me. I looked around me; two lonely beings, shuddering over a discovery which conveyed nothing but terror to them, by the dim evening light, in the remote and long-deserted towers of an ancient castle, far from the comfort of human aid or presence, and feeling that they were unable to encounter an additional circumstance or object of fear, yet dreading lest, while they lingered, some other would overtake them;—two such beings I felt myself and Michelo to be, and startled at the conviction. The confidence of the delegate of heaven was over: I felt myself a timid human being, encompassed by things, and the fear of things, which nature shrinks from, and only anxious to escape by a blind and hasty extrication from them: like a child that, by shutting his eyes, and walking speedily past some spot of terror, imagines itself to be safe.

"I turned from the revolting spectacle before me; I looked along the dim and narrow passage; I wondered at my own temerity in exploring it. A few moments past, and I felt as if nothing could check my progress; at the present nothing could impel me to pursue it. For a moment I wondered at myself, and almost ascribed the change to an influence that made part of the wonders of the place. But the lassitude that mixed with my timidity dissolved the wonder. I discovered it was only the natural remission of over-stimulated feeling; and that if Heaven was pleased to employ my agency, it would prevent the confidence of its instrument being inflated by presumption, by leaving him at intervals to the infirmities of his nature, to his common habits of impulse and cessation, to those usual ebbs and flows of mind, which prove to us that our best frames are of imperfect influence and interrupted length.

"I assisted Michelo, by the light that yet remained, to fill up the cavity with the stones and rubbish we had removed from it, and then prepared to quit the stairs. As we returned, I endeavoured to forbear looking at its dark and silent walls; at the roof, where the light appeared so pale and so distant, it reminded me of that which streams on the hollow eye of a captive through the bars of his dungeon; nay, on the rude, uncouth steps themselves, that seemed just fit to be pressed by the assassin, stealing to the bed of sleep, or bearing away his prey to deposit it in some den, such as we had discovered. But, wherever I looked, I found some food for sombre thought. I quickened my pace.

"In our hurried passage through the cabinet and the chamber, we walked with silent and breathless fear, grasping each other, and endeavouring to fix our eyes on the floor; yet feeling they were every moment involuntarily raised to meet the approach of something we did not dare to intimate to each other. We had now reached the stairs, by which we were hasting to descend, when we distinctly heard, in the apartment we had just quitted, the loud tread of a foot, that seemed to be pursuing us. Michelo, stupified by fear, was lingering at the top of the stairs; with a desperate effort I dragged him along with me, and hurried down.

"The tread came yet louder and quicker behind us: I dared not to look behind; I rushed on with headlong blindness, dragging my breathless companion with me.

"The foot came nearer and nearer; I could feel the stairs bending under its pressure behind me; every moment I dreaded to feel the indenture of its 'fiery fang.' But we had now reached the door communicating with the passage: I dragged it open, and with that involuntary provision which fear often makes against its objects, with averted head I drew it after me and locked it, while I thought I heard the murmurs of a voice within, but whether its tones were those of pain or terror I could not discover. Whatever might be the power of our pursuer, he then ceased to exert it; no sound pursued us, and we encountered no object. We made a hasty and silent progress through the passage, and regained the inhabited part of the castle without observation.

"By these events I have neither been enlightened nor assured; I have been only perplexed and terrified. I have reflected, but without attaining conviction; I have debated, but without forming a resolution. Sometimes my exertion appears temerity, and sometimes my supineness cowardice!

"Am I the agent of heaven, or the dupe of fear and deception? Was the voice I heard intended to summon or forbid? Has the arm been bared to beckon or to repel? Shall I pause, or shall I proceed?

"In this dark and turbid state I look at the picture of Erminia, and taste a momentary, a delicious calm. Adio."

CHAPTER XI.

"Ut assidens implumibus pullis avis
Serpentium allapsus timet
Magis relictis; non, ut adsit, auxilii
Latura plus præsentibus——"—HORACE.

"Thus, if the mother-bird forsake
Her unfledged young, she dreads the gliding snake,
With deeper agonies afraid,
Not that her presence could afford them aid."—FRANCIS.

By the time this letter had arrived at Naples, Ippolito's habits of gloom and abstraction had increased. The scenes of passing enjoyment he had sometimes permitted to chequer that gloom he had now relinquished; and, except the hours that he attended that summons, his whole time was occupied in feeding gloomy thought with solitude. When this letter arrived, none of the servants would venture to disturb their once undreaded master; and Cyprian, who heard them debating, seized the opportunity of venturing into his presence. Ippolito had been for some hours alone in his own apartment. Cyprian, with the letter in his hand, knocked at the door; a voice, of which the tones had never been harsh before, demanded, "Who was there?"—"I am afraid to answer to that voice," said Cyprian; "speak in another tone, and I will say, 'tis Cyprian."—"You may enter," said Ippolito.—Cyprian approached timidly. His master was extended on a sofa; his eyes were shaded by his hand; his attitude bespoke a wish to counterbalance mental inquietude with bodily ease. "This is a letter from your brother," said Cyprian, offering it with an unnoticed hand. After a moment's pause, he left it down, and placed himself before the sofa with folded arms.—"Why do you wait?" said Ippolito, in a hollow and languid tone.—"I know not why I wait," said Cyprian, whose anguish now burst forth in tears, and who hurried towards the door; "I know not why I live; there is neither joy nor use in me now; I know not why I live." Blind with his tears, he endeavoured in vain to open the door, when Ippolito, starting from the sofa, intercepted him. "Pardon me, Cyprian, I knew not it was you; I heard the tones of your voice, but I felt not you were near me. Pardon me, Cyprian. For many days past my senses have been dull

and distempered; the vigils of my nights have disturbed them. Even now, while I gaze upon you, you seem to me not as you ought; and should you change, while I look upon you, to some strange shape, such as I have lately seen, I could scarce feel surprise."—"Oh, do not talk thus," said Cyprian: "what shapes and what sufferings are these you talk of? what dream of visionary anguish pursues and preys upon you? what invisible arm has torn you from life and enjoyment, and chained you down in a prison-house of pain and solitude? Are you persecuted by the power of the living or of the dead? I am importunate, perhaps, for I am fearless. Two days—two dreadful days, I have been deprived of your sight—your sight, which is the very food of my existence. A thousand times in that period have I approached your door, listening for a cheerful sound or motion to encourage me to enter: with a breaking heart I wandered back, for I heard only your heavy groans. But I am so miserable, all fear of your displeasure has ceased; I will even support that, if you will not drive me from you; chide, and look sternly on me, if you can, but let me be near you; the sound of your voice will repay me for anything it can utter: the image of your anguish, when absent and imagined, is a thousand times more terrible than present; or perhaps the sight of you makes all suffering light."

"You would be near me," said Ippolito, appearing to collect with difficulty what had been said; "you do not know, then, that misery is contagious?"—"Misery!" echoed Cyprian, "whence, oh! whence is this perverse repining of self-inflicted suffering? If you murmur, who shall not be suffered to groan? Oh, too lovely—too brilliant—too bright, as you are—more like the gay phantom of a youthful wish than a human being, the destined partaker of infirmity and suffering—you seem almost without a wish as without a fear. What is this sirocco of the mind, that bursts forth in the summer-noon of life, and blasts the freshness of its enjoyments? Why need I enumerate blessings you cannot be blind to—for of the distinctions of nature none are forgetful. Why need I remind you what, oh! what you are?"—"You need not remind me what I am; I know, I feel it but too well. I am a pursued, a haunted, a persecuted being—the helpless prey of an invisible tormentor. Cyprian, a cruel, an inward fire consumes me. The springs of life, the sources of enjoyment, are dried up within me. I feel the energies of my mind seared and withered by the contemplation of a terrible subject, as the eyes would be by being fixed on an object of intense and scorching heat; yet I cannot withdraw them. One subject, one only subject, is involuntarily present with me; wherever I turn, I behold it—whatever I do, it is mingled with: nay, when, from the weariness of overwrought suffering, I become almost vacant of thought or feeling, a dumb and sullen sense of pain mixes its leaven with those moments of unconsciousness.

"You have wrung this from me, Cyprian, by your cruel pity, superfluously cruel to yourself and to me. Your sufferings may be increased by the communication of mine; but mine cannot be diminished by your participation of them. I bore the storm long to shelter you; now you have exposed your feebleness to it, and I can no longer enjoy the dignity of solitary suffering, or the aid of valid support."—"Oh no," said Cyprian, "you know not the power and office of strong affection; it loves not to mix its beam with the summer-blaze of joy—to add its note to the choral song of flattery and pleasure; it reserves them for the dark, disastrous hour, when the amazed sufferer looks round on a desert world; when what he thought he held is dust within his grasp; when what he hoped to trust to is a reed under his steps. Then is the power and the hour of strong affection; then it rushes to him; it grasps him by the cold hand; it speaks words of comfort in his stunned and frozen ears; it clings to him with all the strength of its being, with powers stronger than suffering and death; it abides the conflict of the dark hour, and enters the valley of the shadow of death with its companion; for such is its true nature and power, such emergencies only develope and realise them; among such only it expands its powers, it feels its existence—nay, it seeks its reward. Tell me, not therefore, of sorrow or of suffering; 'tis therefore I seek, and will not leave you. Something whispers me this is an hour of confidence, not of dejection; that I can do much to serve and to save you; that I can perform something that will make men wonder at the energy of zealous weakness. Montorio, I love you, I love you; and to that name nothing is impossible. Montorio, I will examine your heart; and you will confess the cause when I have discovered it."—"Forbear, my gentle, my darling boy, forbear; you spread your little slender

branches to the storm that heeds you not; in passing, it will lay you in the dust, and rush to me unobstructed. Cyprian, I have had a sore struggle; the enemy has assailed me with terrible strength once and again; my strength and my defences are declining, and he will yet prevail; yes, he will prevail, and have me yet in his dark thrall."

"Oh, why do we thus magnify the trivial distresses of life," said Cyprian, "with words of such melancholy and mysterious import, that while we listen to them we almost persuade ourselves we are suffering something humanity never suffered before, and claim such dignity from their support, or such wonder from their confession, that at length we begin to find a delight in misery? You have, perhaps, encountered some common evil, some visitation of human infirmity, or of youthful deviation; your mind, generous, noble, and fostered by long luxury, starts from the prospect of pain, or the recollection of error. But fear not yet; yours must, must have been a venial one; and if your own reflections have anticipated the censures of society, you may listen to them with the calmness of re-established rectitude, nor suffer them to interrupt the even direction of the mind that has regained the path of right."—"And do I hear Cyprian," said Ippolito, "confounding the complexions of good and evil, and teaching an honourable mind to forego that susceptibility of praise from which it derives its best security, as well as its highest reward? Is this my monitor?"—"Oh, forgive me—forgive me," said Cyprian, "for your own sake! 'tis you have corrupted my judgment and my heart. My love for you has made me almost annihilate the distinctions of good and evil. When I look on you, Montorio, I cannot believe you guilty, your mind I cannot think less perfect than your form, and the dreadful deception practised on my own judgment I endeavour, with guilty fondness, to extend to yours. How have I laboured to restore you to the paths of purity and peace, from which your lavish youth, and glowing temptations, had caused a noble heart to deviate. How have I watched and warned—how have I toiled and importuned—how have I trembled and prayed for you. This one great point and object of my life, what could compel me to counteract?—what, but the strong affection that compelled me to undertake it? I find I cannot bear to behold you suffer. I saw you erring, and I hazarded life—yes, hazarded life, to recall and reclaim you; but when I saw you suffer, I could only weep and be guilty; I forgot the great purpose of my mission; I forgot I was your monitor; and remembered only I loved; forgive me, Montorio, for your own sake forgive me!"—"I will forgive you everything, Cyprian, but this waste of lavish love on a wretch whom it wounds but cannot profit."—"Oh, yet do not say so; I have great resources, more than of hope or of advice—substantial resources.

"What is this heavy load of mind? Montorio, I have marked your nightly wanderings. Have you been seduced to the feverish vigils of the gamesters? Have you become the wretched thing of calculations and chances—the agitated sport of knavish skill—the ruined dupe of confederate deception? Oh, thank the blessed saints for the wholesome lesson of your ruin. In that dreadful pursuit to succeed is certainly to be lost; though to be ruined, is possibly to be saved. Be not dejected; the riches of your house are immense; and your father, though I have heard stern and severe, is proud, and will not suffer the honour of his family to be impaired by debt; or should your losses not require the fortunes of a house to repair them, I have resources, Montorio—resources, happily stored up against this hour of pressure; take them, my beloved, take all."—"Forbear, Cyprian, forbear; your conjecture is erroneous; mine are not the vigils of a gamester; miserable as I know them to be, I could almost wish they were."—"Oh, what is this," said Cyprian, distressed and amazed, "what is this more terrible than misery and ruin? Do I read another cause in your pale and listless lip, in your darkened cheek, in your fixed eye? Such, they say, are the looks of those who love. Do you love, Montorio? Alas! is it possible you can, love, and yet despair. Oh, no, no; too happy woman; too happy, methinks, for the indulgence of allowed caprice; too happy for the petty, prescriptive triumph of her disdain; she cannot have punished herself to give you pain; or, if she has, let her behold you now—now in this seducing shade of melancholy beauty; and she must—she will. Oh, why that groan, Montorio? Can you, oh—can you be the victim of love—of lawless passion? Alas! what shall I say? I have heard of wretched, wretched women, who can love for gold; who would take deformity and decrepitude to their arms, instead of even you, if they could outweigh you in the price of their body's and soul's perdition; for such you cannot long languish; alas! what am I saying? Oh, spare me,

spare me, my beloved! make me not the reluctant agent of pollution; tear not from my agonised affection its long, its last cherished integrity. Alas! alas! such is the madness of my guilty love, I can bear to see you criminal, but cannot, cannot bear to see you miserable." —"Perplex yourself no more with this mental casuistry; torture yourself no longer with the superfluous remorse of imputed guilt. I cannot give you the consolation of thinking mine is a case of common suffering, or within the reach of ordinary relief; would, oh, would I were the subject of any, or all, the sufferings you could name, rather than what I am."

Cyprian was silent from the perplexity of severe dismay. At every gradation of their conference he had drawn closer to Ippolito; and now, pressing his hand, he murmured feebly—"If that last and dreadful guilt, the brand of civilized society, the dreadful imposition of an arbitrary phantom, be yours—if you have hurried from earth, and from hope, your rash, offending brother; and if, for a crime man could not forgive, you have sent him to answer for all before the judge, his course unfinished—his task unfulfilled—his soul unabsolved—his salvation unobtained; if you have found that what society can palliate and pardon, conscience cannot, oh, yet is there a dawn of hope. If the agents of justice or of revenge pursue you, let us fly, oh, let us fly, this land of perverted and bloody manners, where the sore alternative of infamy or guilt urges the revolting hand of virtue to deeds its praise cannot purify, nor its sanction expiate. Oh, let us fly, and the prayers of good and holy men shall be with us for good; there is a blessed virtue in those, and the offices of our holy faith, to obtain peace and remission for the souls so sore beset."—"Can murder, then, be forgiven? And if the bare crime, under strong temptation and most urgent cause, hardly dare plead for mercy, what shall be said for murder, impelled by no motive, justified by no pretext, sheltered by no confederacy? for guilt, laborious, determined, inveterate? And this, oh all this, is nothing to the shades of this dark vision."—"I understand not this terrible language," said Cyprian, who looked aghast. "If you have anything to disclose, tell it quickly, for my senses are dull, and I am wearied with pleading."—"I have a tale to tell, but it is not for your ears." He rose hastily—he grasped Cyprian's arms—"Wretched boy, why have you allied yourself to me? why will you cling to me with this helpless force? I am hunted and hard pressed; every night—listen, Cyprian—every night a fire is kindled in my heart—the dagger is put into my hand—the midnight ministers of destiny are round me; they urge—they impel me onward—onward:—all around me is still—the stillness of dreadful preparation. My approach cannot be calculated; my blow cannot be averted; my victim cannot resist; my associates cannot betray: yet I linger—yet I would shrink—yet I would retreat: but my fate cannot be resisted. No, no, no—my fate cannot be resisted." Cyprian listened in helpless horror.

Ippolito approached the window; he leant against the foliage lattice; the breeze of evening blew back his dark hair. Cyprian gazed on him with that mingled pang of anguish and love, of which the bitterness is more than of death. In those visions in which the mind wanders for relief under the pressure of suffering, but finds it only deepened and refined, he imagined he beheld those rich locks rent in distraction; that yet glowing cheek hollow and pale; that noble form wrecked and defaced by suffering; he felt a pang that must not be told, and scarce suppressed the cry that darted to his lips. Ippolito leant against the casement; it looked into the garden of the palace: the breeze that breathed over groves of rose and orange played on his cheek: the setting sun sent his beams through the twinkling foliage; they tinged with ruddy amber, they fleckered the waters of a fountain that gurgled among them, and whose bason, where the waters, that played in silver showers in the centre, lay still and deep, gave back a bright and lovely blue of the heavens, without a spot, and without a shade. Ippolito remained silent long; at length—"I behold all this," said he, "joyless and unmoved; the burthen that sits so heavy on my soul has oppressed my senses too. Or is it that I am already become a disastrous, discordant atom, amid these elements of harmony and love? And am I already at war with nature? Oh, how dreadful to be an alien from our own system and species! not to be able to drink the evening breeze, or glow with the setting beams of the sun; not even to know the pleasure those insects are tasting in his rays; to wish in vain for the quiet life of the fountain that flows, of the leaf that falls. But no, no, no; to be forced to agency; to be invested with dreadful responsibility; to hew out, with groaning toil, the weight that is to crush me to atoms; is there no other task for me amid the thousand, thousand lines of human life, branching and intersecting in endless motion and infinite directions? Is there not one for me but this? and for me, whose heart never harboured a purpose of enmity to living

thing; who knew not what men meant by hatred? In my days of childhood, Cyprian, I have forborne to disturb the insect that fluttered—to crush the reptile that crawled beneath me; and I must, must—and is there no repeal? and is there no retreat? Author of my being and of my fate! hear my groans! hear my despair! Father, they are not the groans of a rebel heart! it is not the despair of daring outrage! but spare me, spare me!"

He rent his hair by handfuls; he cast himself upon the ground. Cyprian, terrified, but unrestrained, fell beside him, and attempted to raise and to soothe him. In a few moments he sprang from the ground; he stood erect, but tottering; his hair was dishevelled, his hands were clenched, his eyes were inflamed and wandering, his face was varied by a thousand shades, but a fixed and burning spot of crimson tinged his cheek. "Whither do you go?" cried Cyprian, grasping him as he endeavoured to rush from the apartment. "To the theatre, to the gambling-house, to the brothel," he roared; "to the floods of wine, to songs of madness; this cannot be borne; off—release me, or will you accompany me, Cyprian, to dissipation, to frenzy, to ruin?"

No prayers could pacify, and no struggles could withhold him: he seized his sword and cloak, and rushed from the palace, madly calling on Cyprian to follow him. The unhappy Cyprian paused; this moment seemed to him the critical one of his life and happiness. To be seen in the streets of Naples was to encounter a certain and terrible death. He had so long considered life merely as a medium of service to his master, that this consideration would scarce have detained him to examine it. But what hope in pursuing the career of a maniac? What profit to Ippolito, in witnessing those orgies he could save him from no longer? He lingered a moment; strong affection triumphed, and he felt the danger of exposing himself, and the despair of serving his master, vanish before that sad and nameless pleasure which we feel from the simple act of clinging to the persons of those we love, even when aid is impossible, and consolation fruitless. He followed Montorio, but he followed him with tottering steps; nor could the impassioned [illegible] of his feelings resist the shock he felt on being for the first time on foot and unprotected in the streets of Naples. Feeble and terrified, he yet tried to keep up with the hurried pace of Ippolito; who, with that lightning burst of generous feeling that blazed even through the storm of his passions, turned to him, spoke some consoling but incoherent words, and then, supporting him with his arm, hurried on. From time to time of their progress, Cyprian endeavoured to breathe a few soothing sounds; but the anguish with which the sight of Ippolito's fevered cheek and fixed eye struck him, drove them back to his heart; or, if uttered, they were so inarticulate, that Ippolito was insensible of them. They proceeded with astonishing rapidity, but without any apparent object, till Cyprian, with the provisional caution of fear, tried, as he passed, to distinguish the windings of the streets, among which he feared he might shortly be left deserted and alone. They reached in a short time the extremity of that part of the city where the Montorio palace stood; they entered a dark, lonely enclosure. Ippolito, who appeared to have been lulled into vacancy by the hum and concourse of the streets through which they passed, now paused and looked around him eagerly, as if struck by the stillness and solitude of the place. "Why have we wandered here?" said Cyprian timidly. "Because," said Ippolito, in broken tones, "because it is wild, and dark, and deserted—because it is meet for the haunt of ruin and wretchedness. I love to gaze on this stilly gloom; to hear the hollow wind that stirs the trees. Would the evening shades would settle on this spot for ever!—would I could dose away being and consciousness here, in stunned and stupid listlessness!"

He leant against one of the trees; his cloak folded on his arm. Twice, with a full heart, Cyprian tried to speak, but could not form a sound. Ippolito heard the murmurs of inarticulate distress near him. "Are you there still, Cyprian—will you still cling to me? Leave me, oh! leave me to myself—to the dark fight I must encounter alone. Cyprian, you might as well attempt to stop the progress of the night that is spreading round us, as of that darker and portentous gathering that involves me. Go from me and be safe; why should I destroy you?—sweet and innocent boy, approach me not—love me not. But for me, you might have flourished in stainless and joyful pu[illegible]ty; but you would tempt the fate of a ruined man; you would go side by side with me in that dark untrave'l d path which we must tread in suffering, and terminate in despair. Go from me, while I yet can warn you, yet can commiserate, yet can pity you; a moment longer, and I shall be wild and reckless as the hunted savage that rushes on the weapons of his persecutors, and grinds them with his tusks."

"And is this then, indeed, our last hour of peace and goodness? Is agonised affection summoned to her last trial-task? Will you indeed be Ippolito no more? I have no more then to say, no more to suffer. But with my dying hand I must hold you; I must cling to you with that strength which overcometh all things, with love, which is stronger than death! I know not the fate which awaits you; it comes in mist and cloud; nor am I anxious to unfold them, to behold it. Suffice it, it is yours. Therefore, by strong necessity of love, it must be mine. Of my brief and unhappy life, the only object has been you—for you I have lived—and I must, must die with you."

Blind with fears, stifled with convulsive sobs, he grasped Ippolito, who, breaking from him with a wild and unmeaning laugh, hastily rushed towards a building which was recently lit up, and to which numbers appeared to be thronging. Stupified with astonishment, Cyprian beheld this change; but the instinctive fear of desertion impelled him to follow. When he entered the building, not even his ignorance could preserve him from discovering its destination. It was a gaming-house, apparently of the lowest description; numbers were already engaged in the pursuit of the evening, and Ippolito mingled among them with a bold and vivacious eagerness, which his companion beheld with additional anguish. His flushed and impetuous manner, his vociferous impatience, his noble air and figure, while they awed the majority, allured a few wily prowlers, who believing him to be disarmed by inebriety, marked him for a sure and profitable prey. Cyprian aghast, alone, unnoticed, stunned by the lights, the confusion, and the jargon—objects as new as revolting to a mind of vestal purity, and almost vestal seclusion, yet retained his observation, which was only preserved by the strength of those feelings that had exposed him almost to lose it. From these violent vicissitudes he collected, not that Ippolito's sufferings were too great for the powers of his reason, but that they were too great for the powers of resistance in a mind which, though not destitute of natural strength, had been so long accustomed to artificial resources of pleasure and consolation, that, finding itself unable to adjust its present grievance by the usual balance of extrinsic relief, it writhed under it in convulsive despair, and produced those throes of grief and fury, of gloom and madness, which had been almost as terrible to the witness as to the sufferer himself.

He had no long leisure for recollection; for Ippolito, whose success had been as rapid as it was unexpected, sweeping together the money which poured in on him from all parts of the table, scattered it among some lazaroni who loitered round the door, and, with a shout of triumph, flew from the gaming-house.

Cyprian pursued him with all the speed fatigue and fear had left him, but in vain; he called on him, but received no answer; he attempted to follow the direction of his steps, but found he was only pursuing a stranger. Then fear and anguish came on him; a wanderer in a populous city, timid, alone, and exposed to greater dangers than he appeared to be threatened by, for one moment of his life he felt a pang in which his feelings for Ippolito had no share. He hastened on, with faint and terrified speed, through many streets and avenues, with a blind satisfaction in the thought of proceeding, yet with increasing alarm at every step, till he found himself again in the neighbourhood of the Montorio palace. Ippolito rushed on his mind—further pursuit of him was impossible, yet it was equally impossible to Cyprian to desert him. He suddenly bethought himself of going to the Alberotti palace, which he knew to be at a small distance, and of which he also knew the possessor to be Ippolito's uncle, of informing him of the late events, and imploring his interference. Wild as this scheme was, and obviously involving the dangers attendant on Cyprian's being recognised, he sprang forward with new and eager strength to execute it; but on reaching the Alberotti palace, he found the avenues obstructed by carriages, and the portico blazing with torches: there was a conversazione, at which the greater part of the Neapolitan nobility were assembled, among whom detection was unavoidable, and death was therefore certain.

From this last resource he turned away, weary in mind and frame; he attempted to totter a few paces homeward; but the thought of Ippolito, abandoned to dissipation and depravity, stung through his heart; his limbs failed; he sunk on the steps of an adjacent house, and burst into that helpless flood of anguish which bespeaks us equally unable to restrain or derive consolation from them.

The sudden emptiness of the street, the mildness of the night, tranquillity, silence, and subsiding emotion, combined to soften him into a kind of placid imbecility. The thunder-

burst of passion was over, and he wept a soft and heavy shower of tears. Too much exhausted for acute or agonised feeling, the images that had passed before him shed over his mind a gleam of melancholy sorrow, not the glare of madness and despair. Every image of former tenderness or brightness, every dream that had once dressed the thought of Ippolito in the tints of attraction or the beams of splendour, now awakened with cruel contrast the sense of his present state; low in vice and in wretchedness, the abasement of his own feelings thrilled to his heart, and he felt the difference between those which accompany the tear of rapture and the tear of humbled regret; between the being he almost bowed to worship, and the being he pursued to rescue, and stooped to raise.

He wept and was refreshed; he rose calm and sad, and endeavoured to return to the Montorio palace, with the feeble hope that some intelligence of their wayward master might have reached the domestics. As he turned the corner of the Strada di Toledo, a lamp burning before the image of St Gennaro caught his eye; and with a smitten eye he turned to pay his passing devotions, where he was conscious the perturbed state of his mind had too often withheld him from. As he approached the lamp, the figure of a man, muffled and moving hastily, passed him. But no disguise could avail. "Montorio, oh, Montorio!" he almost shrieked—he flew from the saint, and pursued the figure. It moved with a speed that defied pursuit, and the utmost exertion of Cyprian could only keep it in sight. It followed a direction far from the palace, and Cyprian at length beheld it at some distance enter a spacious house that appeared filled with company. Cyprian paused and doubted the evidence of his senses; he might be pursuing a stranger, and pursuing him where to follow was dangerous. He had acquired a kind of local courage in these frequent emergencies.

He saw at a distance two cavaliers of sober demeanour; he approached them, and in a voice of which the tones were like those of a wandering cherub, seeking the way to a purer region, demanded whose house it was into which the cavalier who had passed them had entered. The elder of the cavaliers looked at him for a moment, "Perhaps, signor," said he, "I should, from principle, decline to satisfy your inquiry; but as your youth and appearance prompt me to hope 'tis not urged by a personal motive, I shall inform you, that is the house of Nerina di ——, the most celebrated courtezan in Naples." They passed on, and Cyprian remained alone. Stupified by the last intelligence, he had yet heard every syllable of it, and retained its full meaning.

Montorio in the house of lewdness and shame! the last object of life frustrated—its sole hope extinct;—but though the prospect of good was lost, the fear of evil yet remained; the danger of his entering the confines of vice could not be averted, that of his remaining within them still might; yet Cyprian hesitated to follow him. But the delicate gloss of his feelings was now worn off; the shock of encounter had diminished the danger, or, when compared with Ippolito's, all danger seemed to disappear.

From the first moment he had fatally beheld Montorio, he had never been himself. He had patiently and successively assumed the complexion which Ippolito's character and fortunes had given him; his smiles or his sufferings were the uniform and necessary echoes of his master's; he had been the passive dependent of his attachment, whose happiness external circumstances might control; whose fidelity, none could ever. By pursuing him to the verge of ruin, he seemed to be only pursuing the course appointed to him; in plunging with him from its final point, he appeared only to be fulfilling the severe, but absolute task assigned him.

These reflections rushed through his mind in a moment, and, almost unconsciously, he found himself in an apartment of the house. To his inquiries for Montorio no attention was paid; every one was busied in something that appeared remote from the purpose which had brought him there. Sick, faint, and terrified, he wandered from room to room, still calling, still inquiring; the house was loud, festive, and tumultuous. His heart was oppressed, his senses ached, his limbs tottered. Half insensible, but still exclaiming, he rushed against a door, which opening, discovered Montorio surrounded by some of the most licentious of the young nobility, revelling, shouting, drunk with licentiousness, and dissolved in wine. Among such a group, Cyprian (whom some of them had seen at the Montorio palace) was beheld with delight, as an object of mockery and persecution. They surrounded, they overwhelmed him with derisive congratulations; they contended for the distinctions of doin the honours of the revel to him.

With a strength of mind and frame which we sometimes owe to the partial absence of reason, Cyprian brake from them, and staggering to the seat where Ippolito reclined, clung to him, exclaiming, "Save me, save me! save your own soul alive! take me from this house of sin, or I die at your feet!"

Ippolito, starting as if from a trance, protected Cyprian with his arm, and repelling his persecutors with a fierceness which awed even the rage of drunkenness, rushed from the house, bearing his breathless preserver with him. They were pursued by the unheeded roar of dissolute malignity, but in a short time it was unheard, and they drank, without interruption, the dewy freshness of the breeze of night; they saw the chaste and silent brightness of the stars; they caught that deep and stilly humming, so pleasant to the ear that loves to listen by night.

They reached the Montorio palace in silence, and Cyprian with joy perceived Ippolito preparing to enter it. They had now reached the portico, when the clock in the great hall was heard to strike "twelve." Ippolito started and paused, and, by the lamps of the portico, Cyprian saw his eye roll fearfully. He turned. "Whither, oh, whither do you go? Have I sought, have I saved you for this?" cried Cyprian, clinging to him with renewed and impatient anguish. "Off, release me, I may not be held; longer than midnight I must not delay; there is no danger; whither I go, human good and evil cannot come; virtue and vice are negative things; at this hour, I am no more a mortal agent; release me; my hour is come—I may not be delayed."—"These are words of madness," said Cyprian, struggling, though hopelessly, to hold him; "whither have I not followed, and wherefore must I be repelled? Fear, nor danger, nor sin have deterred me! Oh, let me not be left behind! What can I witness worse than I shall fear? What can I suffer so terrible as your danger?" He pleaded in vain. Ippolito was gone with a speed which the fatigues of the night had rendered marvellous, and Cyprian entered the palace with a freshness of anguish which its sufferings had not exhausted.

CHAPTER XII.

LETTER FROM ANNIBAL DI MONTORIO.

"Tum demum horrisono stridentes cardine sacræ
Panduntur portæ. Cernis, custodia qualis
Vestibulo sedeat."—VIRGIL, lib. vi.

"Then of itself unfolds th' eternal door:
With dreadful sounds the brasen hinges roar,
You see before the gate what stalking ghost
Commands the guard, what sentries keep the post."—DRYDEN.

"WHATEVER be the termination of these researches, I already lament the effects of their progress, nor can I review the circumstances I am about to relate without many reproaches on my timidity, and more on my obduracy. The feeling of doubt and uncertainty which had been suggested by my late visit to the apartments, I communicated to Michelo, who, eager to adopt anything that promised a remission of the task imposed on him, avowed it his belief that the tenant of that tower had signified his displeasure of our intrusion by the signs we had witnessed, of which he declared our further misconstruction might expose us to dangers he dared not to name. I took counsel of his fear, unhappily for both, and believing, or compelling myself to believe, that one avenue was rendered impassable by a strength it would be impiety to resist, I resolved to repair at midnight to the chapel, and visit the tomb of Count Orazio, where the appearances I determined to examine were more frequent and obvious, and where, therefore, some suspicion of their being produced by an agent such as myself, qualified the fear which in the tower I had found insupportable without such relief. Michelo, who had become as weary of deprecating as I of importuning, made no resistance, and when (to compensate to myself for the timidity that had mingled in my design of omitting the tower) I determined to visit the tomb on that night, he promised to attend me.

"He was to procure the keys, for he declined with so much terror the subterraneous passages by which we had once resorted there, that I declined the proposal. Our few preparations were soon adjusted: long cloaks—a lamp carried in a lanthorn—and I determined to bring my sword. These arrangements were made with the whispering caution of fear, and we separated. During the remainder of the day I felt myself involuntarily shunning the eye of

Michelo, from a lurking apprehension that every glance we exchanged was observed and interrupted.

"The night at length arrived; our dull and regular household dispersed; I retired to my apartment: my thoughts were occupied by the purpose of the night, and I endeavoured to banish from my recollection the circumstances that had attended my last visit to the chapel. They rose before me in strong shape and clearness; I saw them on every side as I stalked across my chamber; I felt them, as I endeavoured to heave them off my breast, pressing on it, a thick and impalpable weight. With them came many a disastrous presage of uncertain evil. The whole ghastly troop seemed to be arraying for the encounter at midnight in the tomb. My terrors increased; and though I felt that Michelo's arrival was but the signal for those terrors to commence, I yet longed for his approach, for the presence of a human being. This struggle of involuntary meditation was interrupted by a noise at the door; it was Michelo. 'Hush, signor, it is I; are you prepared?'—'I am.'—'Then come, signor; but speak and tread softly.'—'Why this caution? have not the family retired?'—'All, signor, but the pages, who are now assembling to watch in my lord's chamber. But then, signor ——'—'What then, why this hesitation?'—'There is one in this house,' pushing his pale face close to me, and whispering, 'one who never sleeps, or if he does, can do all the actions of a living man, yea, and more, while he would seem to sleep.'—'Absurd; Michelo banish these dreams of fear.'—'Nay, signor, but I am silent; tread softly, however, signor.'

"We proceeded through the gallery with cautious steps; we had now reached the stairs, when a distant sound was heard. 'Hark!' said I. Michelo turned round, and started on observing we were near the apartment of father Schemoli. He communicated this in a whisper. 'Proceed,' said I; 'I saw the confessor retire to his apartment an hour ago.'—'Yes,' muttered Michelo, 'but Heaven knows what apartments enclose him now.' We descended the staircase, muffling our lanthorn, and starting as the wind shook the casements, and the steps creaked beneath our tread. We reached the great hall, and stole through it almost without touching the pavement.

"The deep and midnight silence, the dampness and dull echoes of the marble floor, the huge and dusky height of the walls and roof, over which our single lamp shed a dull, unpiercing gleam, made our passage appear like a progress through a vault. Michelo applied the key to the great door, and I wrapped my cloak about the lock to suppress the sound while he turned the key. Wonder not at this feeble minuteness; I cannot think of myself, creeping along in silence and in fear, without wishing you to accompany me; for sufferings, whether voluntary or not, we always expect some compensation, either of participation or of pity. We issued into the outer court, and I felt refreshment in the air of heaven, though it blew damp and sultry.

"We now entered the chapel, and having reached, through many ruinous obstructions, the tomb of the late count, we concealed our lamps, muffled our cloaks about us, so as to conceal as much of the human form (if seen) as possible; and lurking behind a projecting pediment of the tomb, awaited the event in a state of feeling difficult to describe. There was nothing to relax its intense and severe control; there was no external sound; no light, no motion. It was one of those nights in which you feel, from time to time, a hot blast hissing past you, that sinks again into silence; a night in which the dark and heavy clouds seem to be working with inward tumults; in which, from expecting a storm long, we begin almost to wish for its approach.

"The moon, often struggling through the clouds, tinged for a moment their sombrous and surging masses with a bright and sudden light that vanished in a moment, and the night-dews fell with almost perceptible damp and heaviness. On the dubious features of the structure, tombs and monuments, windows dusky with foliage, and arches shapeless in ruin, these bursts of light and darkness played with such shadowy influence, that he must have had senses not easily deluded, who could be convinced he saw nothing more there than might be seen by day.

"I, however, felt that my situation required me to collect firmness, not to dissipate it, and I attempted to converse with Michelo. 'Tell me,' said I, 'why, when the vaults of this chapel were already numerous and spacious enough to contain the remains of our family, why was a monument erected for Count Orazio; for one, too, whose end I have reason to believe

was obscure and tragical? And why, above all, was it erected in this ruinous and deserted pile, instead of that within the walls of the castle, which is still frequented by the family?'

"'There is a strange report, signor,' whispered the old man, "concerning this tomb, and the reason of its being built. Many things have concurred to drive it from my memory, but your inquiry has recalled it. It is needless to remind you, signor, how much all your illustrious family have been attached to secret studies. But of all, the count, your great grandfather, was most engaged in them. He devoted his entire soul to them; nay, some said so in such a tone as if they wished to be understood literally. But, oh, signor, what am I saying? —rest his bones! they lie within a few steps of us.'—'Why this interruption, Michelo?'—'Is it not fearful, signor, to speak of the dead when we feel them to be so near us?' The effect of this observation on myself I endeavoured to conceal by urging him to proceed. 'Well, signor,' lowering his voice, as if to deceive the dead, 'be that as it may, no power could drag him from these studies; and at length it was said he had invented, by his art, a glass that could show him every event and person he wished to see. It is certain that, after his decease, my lord, your grandfather, spent many days shut up in his father's closet—examining and destroying his instruments and books, and 'tis said strange and doleful sounds were heard to issue from the room while he was thus employed. But the task was an involuntary one; for I have heard the Inquisition were beginning to consider his proceedings as offensive, and had actually dismissed their ministers to examine into them, and to search the castle.

"'A little before the old count's death he is said to have discovered, by his wisdom, that there was a spot in the circuit of the castle which would be the seat of calamity and destruction to the family. He immediately set himself to discover where this spot might be; and I conclude that, if it required so much skill to find out that it did exist, it required still more to discover where. However, your great-grandfather was in nowise dismayed; he pursued his point resolutely, and at length discovered the fatal spot to be the very one on which we now stand.'—'What! the spot on which this tomb has been built?'—'The same, signor. I have heard that the count apprised his family of this circumstance; but the discovery slumbered unnoticed till your uncle, Count Orazio, hearing of it, and being, as I have mentioned, much versed in those studies himself, ordered a monument for himself to be erected on the spot, hoping by this means to fulfil, and yet to avert the prediction; to defeat, yet not appear to defy it.'

"Few that connected what I had witnessed on this spot with what I now heard, could blame the emotion to which I yielded for a moment. But, though the denunciation was terrible, there is a solemnity in whatever we suppose to be connected with our fate, that divests it of the hideous ghastliness attending other subjects of supernatural aspect, and that marks the bounds of awe and of horror. Under a decree the mind bends in controlled and gloomy passiveness, appalled, but not convulsed, without the reluctance and revoltings of visionary terror. As the attempt to relax my feelings had been so unsuccessful, I turned for relief to silence and to meditation. The bell tolled twelve.

"Michelo now eagerly, but still whispering, said—'Look, signor, look through this chasm in the wall you may see—nay, signor, lower, yet lower; you must bend, signor; now, do you see, signor, a fragment of the castle, just above the great stairs?'—'I do see that part of the castle which I believe to be adjacent to the great stairs.'

"There, signor, is father Schemoli's apartment; that part of the tower, and that narrow window, in which you see a light burning, belong to his oratory. Now, signor, every night his lamp is to be seen in that window till midnight, and ever when the bell tolls it is said to disappear; nor from that hour can he be found, nor can it be conjectured where or how he is employed. This only is known, he is not to be found in his apartment. But his friends, it is said, are at no loss to find employment for him. Sometimes he holds a feast with them in the vault, and sometimes he mixes in procession with them through that tower, and sings in their unholy mass at midnight.'—'What words are these, Michelo, and what is their import?' —'Heed not me, signor; mark the lamp; see, signor, see, it grows dim and more dim, and now it is gone; holy Peter, it will be with us momently.'

"The emotion with which I had watched the extinction of the lamp I endeavoured to resist, as the cause was utterly inadequate to excite it. 'And what are we to infer from this, Michelo? The confessor may be permitted to extinguish his lamp at midnight.'—'Ah, but

signor' (depressing his voice to its lowest sounds), 'tis from that moment that strange appearances at this tomb are said to commence.'—'Of the truth of that we shall then soon be enabled to judge,' said I, endeavouring to derive fortitude from the intelligence. The expectation which it suggested scarce permitted me to draw my breath. I continued to gaze vacantly but fixedly, for I knew not in what direction to expect the approach of this visitation. 'Look, look, signor,' Michelo exclaimed, 'look yonder; now, signor, do you believe, now do you behold?' As he spake, a light resembling that we had once before seen, a pale, dull light, appeared moving along a passage which opens by an arch into the east wing of the chapel. In amaze I observed it issue from the lower end, where I knew there was neither door nor aperture.

"I marked its approach, for it was slow; it seemed to have proceeded from the ground, gradually arising and advancing, and looking dim, tremulous, and sepulchral.

"Michelo, leaning across the angle of the monument, grasped my arm; there was no sound; the very wind was still; I heard the beating of my heart. At this moment the moon, riding over the billowy clouds, poured a broad and sudden light through that passage. It played uncertainly through the rifted roof, and fell full on the arch communicating with the chapel. In that instant I beheld a figure standing beneath the arch; a dark gigantic figure: its form and attitude I could not discover; the light was brief and sudden, and the vision confused and imperfect; but I discovered that, as if folded in its vesture, it held the light we had seen, and which, in the moonshine, was diminished to a small, dull twinkle. I pressed Michelo's arm in token of observation; he returned the pressure; neither of us spoke; all was dark; even that pale light disappeared. 'He has seen us,' murmured Michelo.—'Hush!' said I, 'let us await its approach in silence.'—'Something is near,' said the old man, 'I feel the ground near me pressed, as if by feet.'—'Hush!' said I, 'all is silent; a body cannot move without sound.'—'There is something near,' whispered he again, 'for I feel the air driven to my face, as if some one passed me.'—''Tis the bat,' said I, 'that whizzes past us, or the wind that waves the ivy; I have heard or felt nothing yet.'—'Oh, no, signor, there is a strange motion in the air; a rank and stifling chillness, as if something that was not good breathed upon us.'

"There came indeed a blast across us; not like the blasts of that night, loud and feverish, but cold and noisome, like a charnel-stream. We shuddered as it passed; I felt some effort necessary to resist the palsied feeling that was stealing over me. Michelo, let us not be baffled a second time. This form, whatever it be, is probably approaching; before it oppress us with some strange influence, I will rush forth and meet it; and be they favourable or malignant, I will know its power and purposes.'

"Michelo's faint voice of dissuasion was lost in the wind that sighed hollowly through the aisles. I clambered out from my lurking-place, and endeavoured to feel my way in the direction of the light and of the figure, for the central aisle was now totally dark. I advanced a few paces; I felt something rush past me, not with the distinct and alternate step of a human foot, but as if it glided above the earth, and was borne on without effort. I paused and extended my arms; they encountered something that felt like a human hand, raised and extended, and, as it were, pointing onwards: I now called aloud to Michelo to turn the lanthorn, and to guard the door of the vault. By the noise that followed, I conceived he attempted to obey me; but at that moment a cry of horror burst from the tomb; the light disappeared, and the door of the vault closed with a thundering crash. All remained in silence and darkness. I stood petrified; I called on Michelo, and shuddered at the echoes of my own voice; I attempted to move, but felt as if a step beyond the spot on which I stood would be into a gulf. At length I broke from this trance of fear; I felt my way to the tomb; I called on Michelo again, believing him to have swooned. I felt all the pavement and pediments with the hilt of my sword: Michelo was not to be found; the tomb appeared to have opened her mouth, and swallowed him up. I applied my utmost strength in vain to the door of the vault; and though I almost expected it to burst open, and disclose a sight that would scar the eye or unsettle the brain, I yet persisted to struggle with frantic force: no success attended my efforts, no sound encouraged them. Once I thought I heard a low and feeble moaning, but it was lost in that confused and humming sound with which the effort to listen intensely filled my ear Fear, and shame, and impatience distracted me;—to force

the wretched, reluctant, old victim, to a pursuit from which he recoiled; to betray him into the very grasp and circle of it; to leave him expiring amid horrors, of which even to think was not safe; to do this was to me impossible.

"The being at whose approach I had shuddered, I would at that moment have encountered and grappled with to rescue his miserable prey, but there was no hope, and no power of assistance. I could not rend open the vault, and to alarm the castle would be to draw on us, from my father's resentment, consequences as terrible as any power could menace us with. More than an hour was spent in fruitless efforts and expedients; at length I conceived it possible to rouse some of the servants who were lodged in an adjacent wing of the castle, and by rewards to secure their silence with regard to the object for which their services were required.

"It was when I moved from the chapel to execute this purpose, that I felt terrors of which I had been before insensible. Alone, at midnight, among the dead and their mansions, and probably near to some being whose influence and image were the more terrible because they were undefined and unimaginable; because they hovered, with a dim aspect of uncertainty, between the elements and agency of different worlds, because they could not be referred to any distinct or sensible point of fear, nor admitted of any preparation against them, such as men can always make against a human foe, and sometimes against an invisible one.

"Haunted by these feelings, I yet moved on. The night was now still and dark, and in the massy line of shapeless darkness which the castle spread before me, I would have given half its value to have discovered one spark of light; there was not one. In that deep stillness (which made the echo of my steps seem like the tread of many), the slightest sound was not lost. I had almost reached the castle terrace, and was debating which wing to approach, when the hoarse and heavy grating of the door of the vault reached my ear. I paused—I heard it close. Doubting, fearing, yet with a vague expectation of relief, I hastened back. A light breeze waved my hair as I passed, and the volumes of cloud and vapour floated back from the east like a dark curtain fold, and the moon stood calm and bright in a deep azure field, tinging the fractured and shifting masses with silver as they retired. I blessed it, and wondered how often I had beheld that lovely light with apathy, or with pleasure, in which sympathy for the benighted whom it cheered, or for the wanderer whom it succoured, had no share.

"I sought the aisle again. The moon poured a light as broad as day through the windows. I saw the tomb of Count Orazio. I beheld a figure seated on it: I advanced in hope and fear. It was Michelo. He sat like a mariner, who leans on a bare and single crag, after the tempest and the wreck; he was haggard, spent, and gasping. I rushed to him, but he appeared not to hear my moving; his head was raised, and his look fixed on the arched passage; the moonlight poured a ghastly and yellow paleness on his still features. I looked in his eyes, they were hollow and glazed; I touched his hand, it was cold, and dropped from mine. I shuddered, and scarce thought him an earthly man. A moment reproached my fears, and I tried to address some words of comfort and inquiry to him, but I was repelled by an awe in which I scarce thought Michelo an agent.

"'Woe, woe,' groaned the old man, with a voice unlike a mortal sound, his arms raised and outspread, his eye wild and dilated, his whole form and movement rapt into a burst of prophetic ecstacy. I involuntarily retreated from him 'Alas! how is it with you, Michelo? Let me conduct you from this spot; never will I forgive myself for having forced you to it. Haste away with me; my father may rouse in the night, the domestics may be summoned to attend his vigils in the chapel, and we shall be discovered; hasten back with me, Michelo.'—'Woe, woe, woe,' said the old man again, and bowed his head, and fell on the pavement.

"I bore him from the chapel in my arms, tottering; for the weight of age and insensibility is heavy. The air seemed to revive him; and I saw, by the moonlight, something like colour come to his dead face again. As I gazed on, and spoke to him, a shadow, stronger than the waving of the cypress-boughs, crossed the spot. I looked up; I beheld issuing from behind the buttress, against which I leaned with my burthen, the dark and shapeless form I had beheld. The moon disappeared. It passed me, and proceeded towards the castle. I

gasped, but could not speak to it—I stretched out my arms, but had no power to pursue it; it floated onward; and with these eyes I beheld it enter the wall of the castle. It was at the solid buttress-angle of a tower, whose strong line was visible in the shade; there was neither door nor aperture, but there was neither obstruction nor delay. The moon burst forth again as it retired, and Michelo unclosed his weak eye on its beam. He rose tremblingly; I supported him.—We proceeded towards the castle; neither of us spoke; but he moaned heavily, and closed his eye from time to time. We reached the great hall, the door of which we had left open; all power or wish of inquiry died within me.

"When we heard our footsteps on the pavement of the hall, and felt we trod in the house of the living, Michelo, with a faltering hand, made the sign of the cross, and swooned again. I had much difficulty in bringing him to my apartment; and often I thought I heard sounds that passed me, and felt a motion in the passages other than what myself occasioned; but I was in a state of mind in which it was difficult to avoid the illusions of fear. When revived and recovered, he implored to be led to his own apartment. His eye was yet wild, and his words were yet incoherent. I hesitated, but yielded to his earnestness. 'Lead me, signor,' said he, 'to my turret—other hands shall bear me from it; lead me to my bed—a better rest than it shall give me is near.'

"I attended him. I had forborne to importune him; but the wild resolution, the mystery of his silence, wrought with my abated fears of his safety, to excite a solicitude I could not resist. I seated him in his chair; I trimmed his lamp; and departing with a reluctant step, asked, 'Michelo, what have you seen?'—'The secrets of the grave,' said the old man, without a pause and without a whisper. His boldness emboldened me. 'And dare you relate them, Michelo?'—'And dare you listen to them, if I dare, said the old man, fixing his eyes, which shone with strange light, on me. 'I dare—so help me heaven and all the saints, as no weak, personal concern or fear mingles in the spirit with which I await the development of these mysteries!'—'No more to-night, signor,' said the old man, relapsing into weakness; 'leave me to-night; leave me to silence and to heaven. I have need of prayer and of preparation; my time is brief, and my task terrible. But come to the turret, and knock tomorrow, and if I be alive, I will answer you.' He fell before a crucifix, and prayed fervently. The lamp shed its light on his white temples and closed eyes. I retired; and when I closed the door of the narrow turret-room, I felt as if I had closed the door of a tomb.

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"The preceding lines were written in the remainder of that disastrous night, which had left me too much agitated for sleep; I have forborne to send them, that I might add to them an account of our .....

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"Ippolito, I am distracted with shame and contrition. Michelo is indeed dying. The first domestic whom I saw this morning told me (what I endeavoured to listen to as unexpected) that Michelo was ill, and that he had sent for a monk of St Nicolo, in Naples, to attend him.'—'Strange, signor,' said the servant, 'that with so pious a confessor as Father Schemoli in the castle, he would prefer sending to the monastery of St Nicolo.'

"I endeavoured to reconcile myself to this intelligence, that though Michelo might suffer by the shock he had received, it was unlikely those sufferings would be long or severe, far less mortal, and I determined to visit him in the evening, when delay would disarm suspicion, if any existed. But what was my consternation when I heard the family physician declare that his patient would not probably outlive the day! The vital system, he said, had received a shock he could neither discover nor remove. 'Michelo is neither dying of age nor of disease; but he will not probably outlive the day.' I have heard it whispered in the castle, that my father, on this intelligence, desired an interview with Michelo, which was determinately declined. Strange condescension, and strange refusal! Twice to-day have I endeavoured to see him; but his confessor has not yet left him; they have been alone for hours. Hark! I am summoned—he will see me now. The monk has left the castle abruptly. My spirits are solemnly touched. A moment ago they were agitated, but this summons, and the expectation has breathed through me, has hushed them into a severe stillness. Amid all my regret for this unhappy old man, whom I have killed as surely as if I had thrust my stiletto into his

heart, there survives an impression of solicitude, of doubt, and of awe, which I am anxious to feed with strange intelligence. The hour—the place—the purpose—are most solemn; it is night—I go to the bed of a dying man, to learn the secrets of the grave! . . . .

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"I am returned, and the impression I have brought with me, what shall efface? My mind is so completely filled that I feel as if no other subject would ever occupy it; and I write, almost as I think, involuntarily. I found Michelo in his narrow bed. A pale and single lamp lit the room; he held a crucifix in his hand, to which he raised his dim eye from time to time. There was another person in the room, whom, when I became accustomed to that faint light, I discovered to be Filippo, the nephew of Michelo. 'Signor Annibal,' said the old man, 'draw near; I have many things to say, but my last hours are under that dark control which has held them long; and, till a certain moment, I can utter nothing of import. Signor, you see me dying; this is the reward of my long and guilty silence. Alas! I flattered myself that silence was not participation; but a death-bed convicts all self-deceivers. The holy monk is now in possession of my last declaration; prepare you, signor, for its consequences. You have sought a discovery, which will anticipate your efforts. Even I, who would have concealed it by partial communications and pacifying expedients, am an instrument of its disclosure. I see its approach with the indifference of a man who has no more part in this world; but you, oh! you, how shall I prepare you—young, noble, impetuous—how prepare you for it! The house of Montorio must fall!'

"Indignation and amaze kept me silent a moment; the dying man before me was no object for the former; but I fervently wished those words were uttered by some other mouth, down which I might thrust them with my sword's point. ''Tis well for him,' said I, 'your intelligence came from no living man; but even from the dead, I will not believe it true.' The old man kissed the crucifix. 'So may he to whom I am hastening receive my soul!' I paused and trembled, and signified by a motion to him to proceed. 'Not yet, not yet, signor; my hour is not come, and till that arrive I cannot be released; but many are the signs that tell me it is near.

"'I shall not linger long. Signor, tell me the hour, and tell me the moment.'—'But five minutes more,' said I, 'and it will be eleven.'—'Five minutes!' repeated he; 'it seems but a short space to one who has seen sixty-five years; yet I would they were over. Look still, signor, and count to every moment as it passes.' I did so. The old man repeated the numbers as I told them. 'And now, signor, now,' said he, 'is the last arrived? The hand is on the last stroke; now it reaches it, and now—hark to the bell! It is eleven—Filippo, leave us.' Filippo retired. I drew nearer the bed.

"The old man spoke feebly, and with many pauses. 'I draw near the hour of my dissolution. What I have known or what I have concealed will soon be published. That the disclosure will probably affect the fortunes and honours of your house, I presage too well. To prepare you for it, signor, shall be the task of my last hour. There is a being—he is no living man; his thoughts and movements are beyond our knowledge; yet he passes before your eyes, and moves, and speaks, and looks with a show and form of life. This being—I dare not name his name—has held me long in his control. I dared not to speak or move but as I was bidden, for he held power which man might not resist; but I am now released, for I am dying. I shall soon be as he is, and shudder not to meet him. But while I yet speak with a human voice, let me warn you of what impends over your house, signor. He is the evil genius of it—he is the very power commissioned to act and to witness its destruction.'—'Who is this of whom you speak?' He crossed his brow. 'I may not name his name; all that rests is to tell what he has told, and what he has told shall surely come to pass. Many a night have I dimly beheld him—many a night have I felt his hollow whisper pass into mine ears; but last night I saw him—I saw him,' said he, shuddering, 'face to face!'—'Whom?—where? Delay this terrible intelligence no longer. What have you seen, and what have you heard?'

"'I was at the door of the vault,' said he, faltering: 'you left me, and wandered up the aisle, I felt that unearthly thing approach; you called to me to expose the light; I tried to do so: but I was grasped by an influence that froze me up. The cold and bony hand was on me; the blood in my veins thrilled and crept like the cold motion of a worm; the door of the

vault was rent open; I was dashed down it, as if by a whirlwind. The door was closed on us, and I felt as if I was no more a human being. I did not lose my reason; I knew I was among the dead, and with one I feared more than the dead, but I had a kind of ghastly courage. I felt as if the touch of that hand had made me like him that owned it. I was able to look around me. The moonlight broke through the rifts of the vault. I saw his form moving among coffins and bones, and in that dim and shuddering light it appeared to mix with them: then it seemed to sink into the coffin of the Count Orazio; and from thence there came a voice to me that said——.' I listened with all bodily and mental ear—

"'Woe and death,' murmured a voice from beneath us. It was not like a human tone; it was like the moaning blast of midnight; like the deep, long, hollow murmur of a distant sea; but the sounds it bore were distinct and clear.

"The old man's hair rose, and his eyes glared. 'What did you hear?' said he. The truth was too near and terrible to be denied or concealed. 'I heard a voice,' said I, 'that said woe and death.' He smote his hands, and sunk backward. 'My repentance is too late: that was the spirit's death cry. And I must die, and leave it untold; and I must die, and leave it unexpiated.'

"He fell—he gasped—he blackened. I knelt beside him in terrible enthusiasm. 'Speak, I adjure you, while a breath is spared—while a moment is allowed you. Speak, as you would depart in peace, as you would go to glory.' There came only a hollow rattle from his throat. I bent over him, agonizing for an articulate sound. He muttered deep and inward.—'It is too late—Erminia—Orazio' (he added a name I could not catch), 'murdered, murdered. Their forms are before my eyes; their blood is on my soul.' He shook; he was convulsed: he expired. I called Filippo to my assistance; but assistance was fruitless—Michelo is no more."

CHAPTER XIII.

"'Tempus abire tibi est——"—Horace.
"'Tis time for thee to quit the wanton stage."

At the Montorio palace all was confusion and riot. All the influence once obtained, and the concessions once exacted by Cyprian, were scattered and lost by this new sally of riot.

Ippolito returned to his former pursuits with an avidity that promised to compensate for his short abstinence from them. His days were days of pleasure; his evenings, evenings of revelry; but his nights remained nights of mystery. Every day he became more inflamed, more restless, and more intractable. His sense of internal anguish appeared to be more intense in proportion to his efforts to deaden it; and often, while he shook the dice or swallowed the wine, his haggard countenance betrayed a heart far from holding alliance with a thought of joy or ease. The fatigues of his revels and his vigils combined, the fatigues of a mind that sought tumult even in pleasure, and banished ease from its very relief, preyed rapidly and equally on his frame and temper.

The high, romantic spirit, the vicissitude of tender and of lofty feeling, the carelessness of happy vivacity, the play of unlaboured mirth, were gone; and, in their place, intervals of gloom and of fury, of spirits stimulated to unjoyous and fierce excess, or sunk to sullen dejection. His beauty only remained; for, whether flushed by the dark fever-glow of riot, or pale with the gloomy weariness of his nightly watchings, he was ever most beautiful.

At such moments Cyprian beheld him with that piteous and painful delight with which we see the dim and altered face of a native dwelling, or the scarred and dismantled branches of a tree that has delghted us with its beauty, and refreshed us with its shade.

On one of those nights that Cyprian, left to utter solitude, felt only embittered by the thought of him who had once filled and delighted all solitude, he was informed that a stranger of rank demanded to see him. The demand was unusual and alarming, and Cyprian was at first about to decline complying with it; but his ever-wakeful solicitude suggested that the purport of this visit might relate to Ippolito, and he desired the stranger to be conducted to him. He entered. He was a Spanish officer, about the middle of life: the bold and imposing air of his profession was mingled with the stateliness of his nation, and he saluted Cyprian with that ease which bespeaks a familiarity with many modes of life.

"Signor Cyprian, I presume," said he. Cyprian bowed. "I am not ignorant, signor, of your character and attachment to Count Montorio: my confidence in your zeal has been the motive of this visit. I myself know him and regard him; he is a young nobleman of worth and honour, otherwise," said he, touching his whiskers, "a Castilian could feel no interest for him."

Cyprian, warmed by Ippolito's praises, listened with a pleasure he had long been a stranger to. "It is therefore," said the Spaniard, "that I feel myself deeply affected by the state in which I see him plunged; but first permit me to inquire, whether his domestic habits have undergone the same perversion with his social ones. You, of course, are well acquainted with them, and can pronounce whether he appears at home restless, perturbed, and unequal; or whether those appearances are only the consequence of the excesses in which he is immersed when abroad."—"Alas! no, cavalier," said Cyprian; "a new and dreadful revolution has convulsed his whole frame of mind; it affects him at all times, and everywhere; he enjoys no repose at home; he is no longer Ippolito di Montorio."—"The change is as violent as it is extensive, then," said the Spaniard; "he plays for stakes at which it would be madness to take him up; he plunges into frequent inebriety, a vice rare in your climate; he seeks every abode of licentiousness in Naples; his whole effort seems to be to extinguish his reason, and to consume his health. Yet all this appears to be the rusult, not of a rage for pleasure, but of an impatience of pain; these excesses appear the dreadful alternative of anguish that is insupportable. Such vices," said the liberal soldier, "as I have described, might be forgiven in a young man of sanguine constitution and splendid rank, but never should any success lead a nobleman to derogate from his dignity and the stateliness of high-born demeanour, and mix levity with licentiousness." Cyprian had sufficient knowledge of mankind to discover that the motives to rectitude will always vary with the character and habits of the mind that forms them; though, therefore, he revolted from the distinctions of this worldly theory, he adopted the consequences drawn from it.

"I at first," said the Spaniard, "believed this to be only a sally of sudden impetuosity, the consequence of some casual disappointment of his views or his passions; but recent circumstances have induced me to think that a mind of such noble and energetic powers could be perverted by no trivial cause; and I am confirmed in my suspicions by the event of last night."—"Suspicions of what? What do you suspect?" exclaimed Cyprian, rising in agitation. "Suspicions," said the Spaniard, in the deepest tones of his deep voice, "of his being engaged in some bond of connexion, either hostile to his soul's or body's welfare, from which he tries to extricate himself, but tries either too late or too faintly. Were I less acquainted with Count Ippolito's honour, I should fear him to be associated in some dark design against the state; as it is, I believe he pursues some object of private hostility, yet often recoils; sometimes deterred by the magnitude or invidiousness of the enterprise, and sometimes by the danger of the means he must employ to accomplish it."—"Impossible!" said Cyprian, with the most animated action of enthusiasm, "impossible that Ippolito's mind could embrace an object of guilty or obdurate rancour; or if he did, that danger could ever deter him from its pursuit."

"I was about to inform you," said the Spaniard, "of the circumstances that led me to that conclusion; they were his own words, sometimes dropped unguardedly, and sometimes extorted by a sudden pang; but they, at best, are but inconclusive. I hasten to inform you, therefore, of the fact of last night, for I need not remind you, signor, that no Castilian ever draws a rash or hasty conclusion."

Cyprian felt he had offended by his abruptness, but the emotion that had caused left him also unable to apologise for it.

"Last night," said the Spaniard, "a large party of us had assembled in a casino near the Corso; there was high and general play, and several strangers were mixed through the company, who were, several of them, as usual in masks. Count Ippolito was among the rest, in that perturbed and feverish frame we have lamented. He played for immense stakes, and stimulated his spirits by incessant draughts of wine. His vociferation, his eagerness, and his air and figure, which exhibited a kind of splendid and dissolute madness, had drawn all eyes on him. But they were diverted by the appearance of a stranger, whom I can no more describe than I can define the impression his presence appeared to make on the company and on me. He was clothed in a long, loose, dark cloak, that completely concealed him. He

wore a mask, over which the dark plumage depending from his hat, hung so as almost to hide it. He moved along with a slow stride, appearing to know no one, and to be known by none. His presence, though it did not suspend amusement, appeared to suspend all the spirit of it. The loud and eager voices of the gamblers were gradually softened almost into whispers; the loiterers deserted the places he drew near; and one old knight of Malta told me he felt the air breathe a strange chillness as this person passed him.

"I should not have given credit to such effects attending the presence of a single, silent, solitary man, had I not felt myself a strange sensation which I cannot describe, and do not wish to recall; a sensation such as I never felt in the battle or in the breach. This person, after many movements, at length placed himself at the table at which Count Ippolito was playing, and stood, in a fixed attitude, directly opposite to him. I was near them; a superficial observer would have imagined, from the count's manner, that he was insensible of his presence; but from the increased loudness, eagerness, and careless desperation of his manner, I at once drew a contrary conclusion. The eyes of all were fixed on that table. The stranger, after standing some time in silence and motionless, began at length to make some strange and unintelligible gestures, which were evidently directed at the count. The only notice the latter took of them was hastily to call for and swallow more wine, and to double his stake. The stranger then slowly raising his arm, and extending it from his cloak, pointed it full at the count; it was naked, bony, and gigantic; some said it was spotted with blood; I saw none. The count, bending over the table, furiously bid his antagonist, who had paused aghast, to attend to his play. They pursued it. The stranger spoke not; but drawing out a watch, held it opposite the candle which stood by the count; the light fell on it, the hand pointed to twelve. Many, who stood on the other side, said that the reverse was inscribed with strange figures; I could not have seen them if it had. Montorio eagerly pushed away the light. The stranger retreated, but all eyes followed him. He stood still opposite to the count; he appeared to feel in his garment for something. A suspicion that he was an assassin now arose in the casino, and there was a slight murmur heard. But it was quickly hushed by amaze. The stranger, drawing forth a dagger, marked with many a stain of blood, held it up, and waved it with a slow but menacing motion at Montorio. At that spectacle his fierceness forsook him; he gazed a moment; then exclaiming, in a tone between a shriek and a laugh, 'Hell has triumphed!' rushed from the table. The stranger, concealing his dagger, slowly retired from the room, at every step turning and beckoning to Montorio, who followed him with faltering steps, with straining eyes, and with a shivering frame.

"Such is the fact witnessed by several of rank last night in a crowded casino. They who witnessed it did not choose to follow; and when inquiry was made of the attendants they acknowledged they had seen them pass, but had immediately lost sight of them."

Cyprian listened in sore and fearful perplexity. "After consulting with some of Count Montorio's friends, we agreed that the circumstances we had witnessed could only be ascribed to one of the causes I hinted at. We therefore determined to inquire whether the same change had been observed by his family, and if it were, to recommend the expediency of some steps to be taken to discover and remove the cause of it. Your attachment, and the benignant influence you are said to exercise on the count's habits and dispositions, pointed you out as the most proper object for this disclosure. With you, therefore, I leave it; and leave it also with you, in your discretion, to decide whether an application to his family, or to spiritual advice or authority, be most expedient on this emergency."

The acknowledgments Cyprian was preparing to make for this communication were interrupted by loud clamours from the portico. "It is the count returning from the Corso," said the Spaniard, "with some of his noisy associates. I was engaged to sup with them here, and took advantage of the invitation to introduce myself and information to you."—"Stay, then, I conjure you," said Cyprian; "stay with him this night; he is so accustomed at this hour to be abroad that his return fills me with strange presages; perhaps this night he means to break that fearful bond that binds him. Oh, stay with him then, and let him not lose himself in the madness of the revel. You are a man of steady mind and arm; a man such as I would lay hold of in my hour of peril, and bid abide with me. I will be in the adjacent room; and oh, should anything——only remember me."

The revellers were now ascending the stairs, the Spaniard retired to join them; and

Cyprian hastened to a room adjacent to that where they assembled, where he remained struggling with hope and fear.

But he was soon agitated by feelings less remote. The conversation of the banqueters soon reached his ear, and he listened with horror; which, while it moved him to depart, rivetted him to the spot, to the impurity, the wickedness, and the wildness that was poured out by those sons of mirth and ease. Gaiety, of which the happiest feature is fantastic lightness, appeared to be industriously excluded by the accumulation of every image whose fulsomeness could disgust, whose depravity could offend, or whose profaneness terrify. Often he wished for the wand of the enchanter, or the "wings of the morning," to bear Ippolito from pollution, in which his partial hope refused to believe him willingly immersed.

But Ippolito's voice was loudest in provoking and circulating the frenzy of artificial joy; and Cyprian began to feel little consolation in the thought he had remitted his midnight visit; when, in one of those dead and sudden pauses fictitious mirth is often compelled to make, he heard Montorio say—"If a stranger were permitted to view this joyous band, what would he conceive of us?"—"Explain yourself," said one of the cavaliers. "Would he imagine there were among us beings who dared not encounter this hour alone, who rushed to this meeting, not for delight, but for shelter?" Of those to whom this question was addressed, many laughed, and all answered in the negative. "Would such a one imagine," continued Montorio, with increased emphasis, "there were those among us who were assembled here to shun a hand which follows and fixes its grasp on them; to fly an influence that even here extinguishes the lights, and poisons the wines, and makes the flushed faces around me seem as if they were seen through a gleam of sulphur blue?"—"No, no, no," was again vociferated by the company. "Would he imagine that of these rioters, yet a few moments, and every voice will be hushed, and every cheek pale?" The negative was again repeated, but it was repeated by fewer voices, and in a fainter tone. "Then," said Montorio, "he would judge falsely." A pause followed this strange remark. "What do these questions mean?" murmured the cavaliers. "You grow pale, Count Montorio," said the Spaniard. "Do I? and wherefore do I?" said Ippolito, in quick and broken tones; "my hour is not yet come; let us be merry till the bell tolls; why do ye sit round me like statues, all silent and aghast? Let me feel the grasp of your hands, and hear the sound of your voices. Laugh, laugh again; I implore you to laugh. I would laugh myself, but when I try, a raven seems to croak from my throat." He snatched up a guitar, and burst into extempore stanzas, which, as he sung, he adapted to a wild and varied melody:—

Fill, fill the bowl, the ills of life
I'll value not a feather;
No cloud shall cross my soul to-night,
Or shade its sunny weather.

I've sorrowed till my heart was sore,
And groan'd—but hence with prosing;
My last care dies upon this draught,
My last sigh's in this closing.

I'll revel with a bitter joy,
And mock at baffled sorrow;
Nor will I reck how many a pang
Must waken with the morrow.

'Tis a sweet flower, the late, late rose,
That decks the sallow autumn,
And those the dearest beams of joy
That burst where least we sought 'em.

He threw down the guitar. "I am all discord; I have neither tone of mind nor of voice—but I must have music. Go, some of you, and call Cyprian. Let him bring his harp, and hasten to us."

Cyprian, who heard every word, retreated in horror at these, and was hastening from the contiguous room; but the servants, who had seen him going there when the cavaliers entered, in that hasty obedience which their master's wayward moods had lately taught them, threw open the door, and disclosed him. Ippolito clamorously called him forward; and Cyprian, whose compliance with that call was mechanical and unconscious, advanced, though abashed and terrified. Of the cavaliers, many were intoxicated, and all had resumed the obstreperous gaiety which Montorio's questions had suspended. Some were calling for play, and some for more wine; but Ippolito, with lavish and boisterous praises of Cyprian's skill, called for a harp, and insisted on his gratifying the company with his performance. Cyprian silently but earnestly pleaded with his eyes for indulgence; but the demand grew more vehement, the harp was brought, and he sat down with sad and sore reluctance to an employment remote from its congenial scenery and spirits. He touched it with a trembling hand; its broken tones

seemed, like him, to mourn their altered destination. The times when he had hoped the exertions of his talent would have cherished sensibility, and delighted virtue; when the grateful silence of praise struck more deeply on his delicate sense than the boisterous delight, which rather terrified than encouraged him; when he hoped the alternate sway of pleasures that refined, and of influence that rectified Montorio's mind, would have divided his life between the exercises and enjoyments of virtue, instead of lulling into vacancy, the intervals of Bacchanalian frenzy, with a despised and prostituted talent;—those times and hopes struck on his mind, and tears fell fast on his hands, as he hurried over the strings.

But the emotion that shook him added to the expression what it denied to the execution; his eye was raised to Montorio, and the inspiration came on. He appeared to him, amongst that rout, like a frail and wandering spirit, seduced by the apostate host, and mingling in sad association; his brightness dimmed, but not lost—his nature "cast down, but not destroyed." The enthusiasm of genius was exalted by the intenseness of feeling, and he poured forth tones that might have won such a spirit back to its original sphere and glory. All was suspended in rapture; the feast was forgotten; they hung all ear and eye on the minstrel. The clock struck twelve unheard. At that moment a loud exclamation burst from Ippolito, who started from his seat, and stood bending from it, with arms extended towards the door. Every eye followed the direction of his. The servants who were collected round the door hastily retreated: while, emerging from it, was seen the figure which many of them had seen the preceding evening at the casino.

Its appearance was the same as the Spaniard had described it; it was dark, shapeless, and gigantic; its face was concealed in a mask, and its head overshadowed by plumage. The cavaliers stared and murmured; Cyprian pressed close to Ippolito, and the figure stalked slowly into the midst of the hall. An utter silence succeeded; the very rustling of the cloaks of the guests, as they laid down their untasted wine, and turned to gaze on the stranger, had now ceased; and the sound of their shortened respiration almost came to the ears; when the stranger, turning from Ippolito, opposite whom he had planted himself, addressed the company—"I am here an unbidden guest: does no one receive the stranger? then I must welcome myself." He e ted himself near the head of the table, while those next whom he placed himself seemed doubtful whether to withdraw from him or not: his appearance had amazed, but his voice had congealed the company. There was something so peculiar in its tone; so hollow, yet so emphatic; so distinct, yet so seemingly distant; that they who heard it, listened not to the words, but to the sound, and hung on its echo as on something that issued from an invisible direction.

Ippolito now sunk slowly back into his chair, with a face still turned, and eyes still fixed on the stranger. "Pursue your mirth, cavaliers," said the figure again, in a tone that seemed to annihilate all mirth—"my business is alone with the Count Montorio."—"You shall not have me, unless you bear me hence in a whirlwind. From this night no power carries me, willing or alive, to your haunts."—"You know my purpose and my power; delay not, resist not, retreat not."—"This is most strange," said Ippolito, recoiling in his chair, and grasping the arm of the Spaniard, and muttering in hollow and hurried tones, while his eyes wandered eagerly over the stranger; "this is most strange!—ye see how he sits there, in strong and visible shape, amongst us; every eye can behold, and every ear can hear him. This is most strange!—the forms that float before us in our sleeping and waking dreams, or those more substantial ones that mingle in scenes of horror, in the solitude of midnight, in the vaults of the dead, in the chambers of sorcery—these can be banished as they are raised, by local influence; they can be dispersed by light, by human presence—nay, by the effort of a collected mind. But when they pursue us to the very hold and circle of our shelter—when they sit before us amid our mirth and wine, in the blaze of lights, and the loud and comforting tone of human voices: when they do this, and will not be repelled, what shall we think?"—"Ippolito di Montorio," said the stranger, "delay not, resist not, retreat not; must I speak the words of power—must I produce the seal of your bond?"—"Summon your instruments and your powers," raved Montorio, with a shrieking laugh; "let them bear me off in their visible grasp; shake this house to its foundations, and amid the ruin bury me or bear me off; if you will have me, I shall be no easy prey." The stranger rose, Cyprian shrieked, the cavaliers rose, murmuring and preparing to draw their swords—the stranger waved his arm: "Children of earth," said he, in a voice of thunder, "avaunt!" For you

there is neither task or summons here. Ippolito di Montorio, I call on you; the bell has tolled—the hour is past. Ippolito di Montorio, come with me."

Ippolito remained silent and unmoved. The stranger, as before, produced a watch; it was fifteen minutes past twelve. "Knowest thou this hour," said he, "knowest thou the deed which must be done at this hour? Ippolito di Montorio, come with me." Ippolito remained silent and unmoved. The stranger again produced the terrible dagger; the stains were numerous and livid; he waved it again before Montorio, whose eye seemed to lose all intelligence as he gazed on it. "By this dreadful instrument I adjure thee; by his blood, which has rusted the blade, I adjure thee; I adjure thee by those who saw it shed, whom thou mayest not deceive and canst not escape. Ippolito di Montorio, come with me."—"Liar—liar accursed!" thundered Ippolito; "he lives, his blood is in his veins—no dagger has ever drained them. Why stand ye all round me in this dead distraction? Seize him, secure him; another moment, and his witcheries will chain you to your seats, or waft you miles away; seize that dagger—I have discoveries to make." While he spoke, he and the company had surrounded the stranger; swords were now drawn, and arms extended to seize him—all was confusion and tumult. Cyprian, who had rushed forward, heard an eager contention of voices. "Seize him!"—"Where is he?"—"Here."—"There."—"Gone!"

The company gazed on each other with vacant and fruitless amaze. There were only two doors to the apartment, through neither of which had he been observed to pass. There was but a momentary pause, for Montorio, exclaiming, "He that is not bereft of reason, follow me." rushed from the palace. The company, partly in that perplexity which takes its omen from the first voice it hears, and partly in that solicitude to which any new object is a relief, accompanied him, and were attended by the servants, who seemed to have an ominous dread of remaining in the hall; and of the witnesses of this strange transaction, Cyprian alone remained in the deserted apartment.

When the pursuers reached the street, they perceived the necessity of adopting different directions. Among them was a nobleman who had been intimate with the father and uncle of Ippolito, but whom his riper years had not yet taught to retire from the revels of youth. From the first appearance of the stranger in the hall, he had appeared uncommonly agitated. His attention to the figure, its voice and its words, had been marked and earnest; and on the proposal to pursue different directions, he chose one that appeared most remote from the discovery of the object, and insisted on pursuing it alone. These circumstances were, however, but little attended to, in the mingled tumult of intoxication and terror; and the nobleman was suffered to pursue his way alone.

Two others, who had tried theirs without success, were returning to the rendezvous when they heard behind the projecting tower of a church, through whose portico they were passing, voices which appeared to whisper, and sounds that resembled a struggle. They halted, in that hesitation in which the senses wish to assure themselves of their objects, and they then heard distinctly in the terrible voice whose tones yet dwelt on their ears, "Release me—you know not who I am."—"Then by these blessed walls," said the nobleman who had gone alone, "I will know before I release you! Contend not with me, but tell me what you are; your life is in my power, if you are indeed a living man." A pause succeeded, which was followed by a loud and fearful cry from the lips of the last speaker. The listeners now rushed, and found the nobleman alone, and extended on the pavement in a swoon. They heard not the steps, nor saw even the shadow of him they believed had been with him; but had they, their companion would have occupied their attention more powerfully, as they believed him to be dying.

The others, who were dispersed in neighbouring directions, were collected by the noise, and assisted to support the Duke di —— to the palace. Each expected abundant information on the subject of their pursuit, on his recovery, from the report of those who had been in the portico; but that recovery appeared long doubtful; medical assistance was procured, and the patient slowly regained the power of speech and motion. But when he did, it was only to aggravate the suspense of the listeners. From time to time he murmured, "I have seen him, it is he!"—and the weakness into which he relapsed forbid further inquiry. Another object now engaged their disappointed attention. It was discovered by Cyprian's eager inquiries that Ippolito had not returned with the rest; and of the direction he had taken, all seemed to be ignorant.

The duke was now borne, still partially insensible, to his carriage, and the convivial party separated, aghast, amazed, and unsatisfied. More inquiries, prompted by curiosity than solicitude, attended the bed of the invalid the next day. He continued virtually insensible; to his friends he made no communication, to his medical attendant no complaint, to his spiritual no confession. The words, "I have seen him, it is he!" were ever on his lips. He lingered a few days in this partial delirium, and then expired uttering these words.

The day following the feast, Ippolito returned as usual, distracted and oppressed, but with unsubdued activity. He that day visited his companions, and solemnly entreated them to conceal the transactions of the preceding night. The request was easily complied with, for they could have told little but their own fear and uncertainty; and Ippolito returned, without interruption or interference, to his vigils. In a few days, a billet arrived from Annibal, of which the former part seemed to refer to some letter recently received from Ippolito.

LETTER FROM ANNIBAL.

"You are then as I am—your letter describes an agency similar to that by which I seem to be led;—what shall we think?—by whom and whither are we conducted? I fear to follow, and I fear to pause; nor do I know whether these corresponding operations should remove or suggest doubt, should confirm the suspicion of deception, or of a power that extends everywhere, and blends characters and situations the most remote in the completion of its purposes. Either apprehension confirms my intention of pursuing my search and my inquiries; they must eventually lead either to the detection of fraud or the discovery of truth. How do we flatter our motives! Were mine examined, perhaps curiosity would be found the principal cause of my visionary heroism; yet I have witnessed things that render curiosity almost a duty. Filippo, who has much attached himself to me since his uncle's death, often attends me with a face of busy significance that seems to tempt an inquiry: but I should only be mocked by the grossness of vulgar superstition; he has nothing to relate which I need wish to know What Michelo concealed from me, he would not possibly communicate to him.

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"Night, eleven o'clock.—The castle is in confusion—some extraordinary intelligence is said to have arrived; there was a messenger from Naples—he is gone; no one knew his errand or his employer; but everything seems in silent, eager preparation. What may this mean?

"Filippo has just been with me. 'Have you heard, signor, of the intelligence from Naples?'—'What have you heard, Filippo, for I perceive you wish to disclose something?'—'I, signor! nothing signor, I assure you—nothing I can report as certain. Just now I heard it said, indeed, there was some great visitor expected from Naples, for whom preparations were to be made, and whose arrival, it was said, surprised my lord, your father, extremely. The cause of this visit, signor,' said he, glancing his shrewd dark eye at me, 'none of us presume to guess.'—'Do you know who this visitor is, Filippo?'—'There, signor, I scarce dare venture my information again; but it is said,' lowering his voice, though we were alone, 'it is said to be the Duke di Pallerini, his Majesty's confidential favourite; that is, signor, not his ostensible minister, but, as it were, a kind of trusty agent, who is always employed on secret and important services; you understand me, signor?'

"The gravity with which I endeavoured to listen silenced him. Shall I trust this man, or not? There is a shrewd promptitude about him I like. Will this visit bear any relation to the object of my pursuit? Beset as I am with perplexity and fear, I lay hold on everything for relief, and everything deserts or deceives me.

"Noon:—The duke has indeed arrived. Have you heard anything in Naples of the purpose of this visit? If it be an object of weight and of secrecy I pronounce the man, from the first view of him, adequate to the trust. At first you perceive in him nothing but the suavity of the courtier; but a little observation discovers this to be only a veil to the other qualities of that character. His conversation is guardedly limited to indifferent topics, of which the charm of his manners conceals the insignificance. His very words seemed weighed in the balance of diplomatic decorum, yet you see an object ever directing his most trivial movements; he seems to me a mental assassin, who lurks in the shade of his purpose to spring on the prey. But we often draw conclusions, not from what we see, but from what we deter-

mine to see. His presence has diffused something like life through this gloomy house. My father, my mother, appear to be gratified by this visit. The rest of the family, with myself, welcome it as a suspension of dreary monotony

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"Filippo has been again with me; there was a secret in his countenance which he did not suffer to burthen him long. 'Does the signor,' said he, 'recollect that there are certain apartments in the castle which are supposed to have been unvisited for many years, and of which my late uncle had the keys?'—'I have heard of such apartments.'—'And I have heard, signor, that since my lord your uncle's death they have never been entered, never been opened, never even approached.'—'That,' said I, almost unconsciously, 'I know to be a falsehood.'—'And so do I,' returned Filippo with quickness. 'You!' said I, astonished. 'And if my signor will please to listen,' he added, 'he will hear something still more strange. Our apartments, signor, are situated near that tower; mine is directly under a passage which is said to lead by a staircase to those apartments, and often when I have lain and listened to the wind as it moaned so hollow down that passage, I have thought I heard other sounds mingling with it. Since a late period, indeed, those noises increased, and often have I expected to hear the feet that fell so distinctly in that passage enter my room and move round my bed, so plain and certain was their sound. But the danger which my mention of the adventure near the old chapel incurred taught me silence and fear. Last night, however, signor, it was my lord's order that we should feast the duke's servants, and give abundance of wine to them; such store, signor, was given out, even lachrymæ Christi was not grudged them; close knaves they were, and shrewd. The more wine was poured down their throats the more silent they grew; and at length they all pretended to sleep; some of them did so in reality, and then we saw huge stilettos peeping from under their cloaks. Strange that one nobleman coming to visit another should arm his attendants so.'—'And is this all you had to communicate, Filippo?'—'Pardon me, signor, I was going to inform you. We separated late, and just as I had got to bed I thought I heard the door of the passage open; I listened; it was a sound I had never heard before; for though steps had often trod that passage, they seemed to have issued from the wall; neither lock nor door had I heard ever till last night. It seemed to be opened slowly and cautiously, and many steps then brushed over my head. I sat up in my bed, and looked upwards vacantly; but the ceiling is old and shattered, and through the chinks I could see light passing till it had gone beyond my room. I know not, signor, whether the wine I had drank gave me courage, but I rose, and leaving my room softly, I went where a few steps lead to the door of that passage; I ventured up them—the door was open—and as I looked down it I saw distinctly figures moving, and among them one whose habit resembled a monk's. I stayed till they disappeared, and then I heard other doors opening, and all night after I was disturbed by frequent noises in that direction; noises I might have mistaken for the wind, had I not seen what I did. But now, signor, the strangest part of all is, that, recollecting the events of the night, I ventured, when the servants were in another direction, to examine the door this morning, it was still open. Twice since have I gone to it—it remains open; that is, signor, closed, but not locked. Now if my signor had any curiosity to visit those apartments——' I was struck by the circumstance he related. 'You informed me,' said I, concealing my knowledge, 'that your uncle had the key of those apartments; who has obtained them since his death?'—'That, signor, no one knows; nay, no one ever knew, but by conjecture, whether they were in old Michelo's possession or not; he never owned it, and the servants would ask him for the keys of the tower when they wished to torment him.'

"I mused for some moments; so many objects, and opportunities, and agents, all contributing their unconscious but regular operations to the same point, all varying in the means and direction, but all agreeing in the end; all acting involuntarily, yet with an uniformity that suggested the idea of a superior influence; their agency neither obstructed by difficulty, nor deterred by fear; nor, as it should seem, dying with the death of their principal mover; all these struck me with a conviction of fatality in the direction they pointed out, which I could not resist, and to which, if I did, resistance would be vain. I submitted, therefore, silently, with awe, but not gloom; resigned, but not dejected. 'Yes,' said I, with an earnestness that appeared to surprise my attendants, 'yes, we will visit those apartments; to-night the

The monk spake in hurried and eager tones, but without the eagerness of discovery. "I know ye; I know the secret of your fear; I know the purpose."

"Whom and what do you know, and whence this intrusion?" said the countess, passing with dexterous quickness between the count and the confessor, to conceal the pale and fear-stricken visage of the former, on whom she cast looks of smothered fury, and muttered, "Shame! shame!" through her shut teeth.

"It is in vain," said the count, with a look of anguish and horror; "it is in vain, he knows it all."—"I know it all," repeated the monk.—"He echoes your words; will you prompt him yourself? Or if he knows it all, have you not still a resource?" She pointed to his dagger; then turning boldly to the monk, to conceal the movements of the count, again demanded of him what he knew, and wherefore he was there? The monk laughed. The blood of Montorio and his wife ran cold to hear his laugh: they almost wished he had told his discovery.

"Lady," said he, "urge me not. I know the deed, and the time—and the place—and the sign. I can repeat the signal of the secret. I have read the mark on the brow. Do you remember your miserable agent, Ascanio? Do you remember the monk of the mountains?—the confession—the secret—the letters of the prior, and how you trembled at their dark intimations?"

"Who, who is this?" said the countess, in terror.—"Must I go on, or is your soul shaken yet? Do you remember Orazio and Ermina—the betrayed—the distracted—the murdered?"

"Hold, hold! what, oh, what are you?"—"Do you remember," said the monk, in a voice that froze them, "do you remember that night, that terrible night, when the thunder roared, and the earth was rent to appal you in vain? Do you remember the north tower—the narrow staircase—the evening gloom? Do you remember how your victim struggled? Do you remember her dying curse—her dying scream? Six strokes your dagger gave—I feel them all; at the seventh his blood rose to the hilt. You heard him chatter—you saw him convulsed—you felt him quiver—ha! ha! ha! Go, comfort your pale husband yonder, he seems to swoon."

He released her arm, which he had grasped with violence; she staggered from him, and fell senseless on the floor. The count remained petrified, holding his half-drawn dagger.

"Look to the lady," said the monk; "I came not to terrify, but to save you. You are in danger; I know its direction, its nature—nay, its very degree. But fear you not; they can do nothing without me; you are safe from all human power, and all human vengeance. I am your dark, invisible shield. Be bold and reckless of them. Montorio, sad and fearful man, be bold. It is midnight now, and I must hence, on a far and dreary summons. Montorio, be bold and reckless."

He disappeared through the secret door. The count raised and supported his wife. She recovered. She murmured, "Are we——"—"Alone,", said the count; "you called no assistance? None saw us; none!"—"Right, right," panted the countess;" better death than discovery!"

She rose, feebly leaning on Montorio, the energy of her mind contending with bodily weakness. She could scarce stand, but her eye and tone were firm.

"What fearful voice was that which spake to me?"—"It was no fearful voice; it spake of strength and courage. Aye, and I do feel strange courage and strength within me since it spake."—"Are you mad, Montorio? He knows our secret—pursue him, he is unarmed; he has not quitted the passage."

"Woman! woman!" scowled Montorio, "weak and daring; but now you fainted at the name of blood, and now you urge me to shed it. I will not pursue him. Were he here, and at my very sword's point, I could not thrust at him. Zenobia! that man is the very agent of our fate. From the first moment I beheld his dark eye, and heard his deep voice, I felt my mind and genius in subjection to his. At our first conference, he appeared to be in possession of the burthen that presses on my soul; and he appeared to possess it, not in the vulgar joy of an inquisitive spirit, but with the deep consciousness and compassion that thinks not of the crime, but of the criminal. He has prayed with, and for me, in fervent agony, the livelong night, till the big drops, like those of death, stood on his pale forehead; but never till to-night did he own the extent of his knowledge, though he must have long been in possession of it. When I talk to him, events the most distant—the most secret—the most minute, seem all

perfectly known to him; wherever I have been, he seems to have been—to have seen all I have seen—and to have known all I know. His presence, his voice, seem to act on me like a spell. Either my spirit, weary of suffering, sinks into that lassitude which precedes dissolution, or it bows to its arbiter, with conscious submission, and tells me to rest on him. And even now departing, he bid me be bold and fearless. I will not fear; I will rest on him."

"Montorio, you mistake the amazement of a harassed spirit for the confidence of a controlled one. This is the monk of the mountains, whom your superstition would transform into the minister of your fate; he holds the confession secret, which, perhaps, he only awaits the arrival of Pallerini to disclose to-morrow. And will you, will you see the serpent crawling within your walls, and whetting the sting that is to pierce you, without an effort to crush him?"

"It is impossible to reach him now," said Montorio.—"Impossible!"—"Yes; when he came to reside here he told me I must never summon him at night, for every night he said he had a task which might neither be deferred nor suspended."—"A pretence for an opportunity of prying."—"No; often in my midnight visitings have I sent for him; but never was he to be found. The castle gates are locked every night; but he passes everywhere without noise or obstruction; he knows the secret avenues better than we do. I have seen him appear from walls where no door was; I have seen him in the passages of the—the—tower, but never at night may he be found."

"Your account almost tempts me to your own confidence in him. But what have we else to grasp at? It is the involuntary fortitude of misery that converts its instruments of suffering into instruments of relief. At least, I am content to abide till to-morrow, for what can be done or known till then?—Yes, to-morrow much will be known."—"Did you speak, Zenobia?"—"No, I was sheathing the dagger you had dropped."—"I thought I heard a voice murmur, to-morrow; but I am often so deceived. Good night, Zenobia. Let the attendants return, and look you give orders for to-morrow's preparation with a cheerful tone."

The countess rose to depart; but as she crossed he grasped her arm; his eyes were cast upward; their lids quivered; his teeth were strongly shut; his frame rose and dilated with an intense and straining movement; he held her strenuously, but spoke not.—"How is this, Montorio? Speak, what do you see, or feel, Montorio? Speak to me; must I call assistance?"—"Stir not, speak not," he hissed through his shut teeth.—"What, and wherefore is this?"—"There—there—there," he sighed slowly, while the spell which held him seemed to relax. His eyes moved again, and the muscles resumed their tone and direction.

He sunk into the chair, still holding her arm, and almost dragging her with him.—"So, now, you must not leave me to-night."—"Not leave you!"—"No; the feeling has been with me: I know its deadly language; it tells me what shall befall to night."—"What shall befall to-night?"—"Ay; ever when it comes, my eyes grow dim, my ears ring, my flesh creeps and quivers. Then I know that I shall walk in my sleep that night; and you must abide by me, Zenobia. From the strange looks of those who watch with me, I know I talk in those nightly visitings; you must abide by me, Zenobia; none but the murderess must hear the ravings of the murderer."—"Yes, I will watch with you. This is the meed of our daring. But how know you it will come on to-night?"—"Whenever my mind is shaken by the mention of those events, then I know it will visit me. I have also a short convulsive summons that betokens it; you have seen me wrought by that; but now—prepare for the night, good wife; for what a night must I prepare!"

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"How is the night?" said the count, raising his heavy eyes to his wife.—"'Tis almost twelve."—"Then my hour is very near; I feel its summons coming on; 'tis heavier than sleep, yet 'tis not like the drowsiness of sleep."—"Is there no means of preventing or of mitigating it? can you not turn your thoughts in another direction?"—"Can you?" replied Montorio, fixing his eye on her.—"Is it not at least possible to repel sleep, and so repel this terrible companion?"—"No, no, no," murmured he, with the heaviness of reluctant drowsiness: "I have tried a thousand ways a thousand times, but never could I resist the lead-like weight of that unnatural sleep. Oh, it were mockery to tell you, Zenobia, the childish, miserable things I have done to prevent these nightly visitings! I have wasted the day in fatigue, and the night in dissoluteness; but ever when it came, though the sleep that seized me were as deep as death, I rose almost as soon as my head touched the pillow. I have determined to watch at

my casements, to mark the moon and clouds, their changes and shapes. I have turned my thoughts intently to one point and object, and still, as it stole from my mind, I have tried to recall it. I have counted the sparks in the embers, the figures in the tapestry, to force attention to wakefulness; but ever when midnight came on, I sunk into sleep, with all the horrid consciousness that it was not slumber, nor rest, but a living hell that awaited me. I have made my attendants read to me, varying their tone and subject, and bid them, if they saw me slumber, shake and rouse me up—but all in vain. When I have started from my dream, I have beheld them asleep with their books in their hands, and when I upbraided them with negligence, they fell on their knees, and declared they neither could rouse me nor preserve themselves from the influence that overcame them."—"Merciful heaven! and this the moment your eyes are closed."—"My eyes never close," said Montorio, with a piteous ghastliness of visage; "on those nights; they continue open during the whole of my wandering."—"It will be a fearful sight for me to behold you."—"Ay, we must bear them though; we must learn to grapple with our fate, and all its terrible circumstance and feature. But, mark me! however ghastly the sight, close not your eyes—close them not for a moment; if you do, sleep may overcome you, and the prying knaves of the chamber may listen, or enter unobserved: no, though spent and affrighted, the wife of the murderer must not sleep."—"Fear me not; I shall neither slumber nor fear."—"However desperate my convulsions, my struggles, my sufferings—if my very hair stand upright, if blood gush from my nostrils, if I be drenched with the sweat of fearful agony, yet waken me not, Zenobia! let the vision spend its terrible force! for if wakened in its paroxysm, reason is irrecoverably lost. Alas! Zenobia; by the light, I see your eyes begin to wander, and your voice sounds faint: rouse, rouse—you must not sleep, Zenobia; tell me the hour, and how much of it has our melancholy conference wasted?"—"The timepiece is beside you."—"Ay, but I want to see you move, and hear the sound of your voice answering me; tell me the hour, good wife."—"'Tis but a quarter past twelve."—"But, but a quarter! I thought we had almost dragged out one hour: when, by some strong effort, I have resisted its influence for an hour, with what delight have I heard the bell toll one, and thought it was so much nearer the morning—that so much of the terrible night was elapsed! But even that miserable respite is denied to-night. I feel that deadly sleep coming on me fast: speak, speak to me, Zenobia; let me feel your hand, or hear you move! no, no, no; all palsied, numb, and drowsy."—"Try to rise, and walk up and down your apartment; I will support you."—"In vain, in vain," he murmured; "I should sleep if rocking on a wave."—"At least retire to bed, before this oppresses you; perhaps you might get some sleep."—"No, no; I will remain in this chair; even in my slumber, I feel the horrid motion of rising from the bed."

The last sentence was almost inarticulate; he shivered—he moaned—he fell backwards; his eyes closed for a moment, but, opening again, remained staring, motionless, and dead; his hands moved with a faint tremour, and his heavy respiration sounded like a groan. The countess, with involuntary fear, caught a cross that hung on her bosom, but dropped it again, while a terrible expression crossed her countenance.—"What have I to do with thee?" she half murmured, and half thought: she then seized a book that lay on the table, and began to read with fixed and vehement attention, studiously confining her eye to the page. She was disturbed by the louder groans of Montorio; she read aloud in the endeavour to drown them, but they became stronger and more terrible; she could no longer hear what she read—the book fell from her hand.

The groans were followed by some inarticulate sounds, and he then began to speak in tones so distinct, yet so unlike human accents, that she thought the groans had not ceased.

"Zenobia, Zenobia," he said, in a quick low voice, "where are you gone? What is this melancholy light by which I follow you?—the pale glow of embers! Nay, then, she must be near. Let me draw the curtains of this bed. Is this you, Zenobia? Ha!—lightning rive me!—Erminia!—let me—let me fly! no, no, no; her eye has fixed, her touch has frozen me. Must I stand here for ever, rooted, congealed, gazing face to face, touch to touch? I cannot move my foot, or withdraw my eye, or think myself away. Ha! her cold shroud encloses me like a snow-cloud; her dead arms creep round; the icy dart of her eye numbs my brain. Help, help me, Zenobia! I sink, I sink with her! Oceans of mist and snow! storms of icy sleet and shower! cold, cold—oh, cold!"

His teeth chattered with frightful loudness, and the seat shook with his shaking limbs.—"Whither, whither now?" he muttered; "aye, I know your haunt; I know whence this dim unnatural light steals from! ye shall not drag me to the tower; it is in the castle, I know, and not in this misty bay. I will lurk in this gulf, and shun it. Ha! 'tis here; I move without feet, and without change of place; this is witchery! I will pray and cross me, then no evil thing shall control—Father Schemoli, cross me on the left breast there—near the heart, for they say it is troubled and impure; I would do it myself, but my hands are bloody! Ha! ha! ha! What hand was that which wrote on my breast? I bid it sign the cross—Orazio!—Erminia!—Verdoni! in letters of burning sulphur!—Help, here!—Water!—steel!—wash it!—erase it!—tear it out!—it eats into my flesh!—it drinks up my blood! Now they surround me!—save me, save me!—I stand their burning food! Oh, their hot pincer-fangs! they hiss in my flesh! Oh, rend out my heart, and let me have ease!—see, they divide it among them!—it spreads, it burns, upward. upward! my hairs blaze up, my eyeballs melt! I burn blue, and green, and red!—I am a hell!—Fire, fire, fire!"

He roared with strong and horrid force, and started from his chair, and spread his arms, with the action of one who struggled with flames. A scream rose to the countess's throat—she suppressed it with convulsive firmness. A dead silence followed this burst, and in its pause the countess heard the deep and heavy breathing of the sleeping pages in the anti-chamber. She felt there was something extraordinary in their torpor, but the security which it promised balanced the fearful thoughts it whispered, and she listened to it with delight.

He advanced from the chair with a slow and steady motion; he moves to the door; there he seemed to encounter some object, whom he addressed in low and pacifying tones. "'Tis true, my lord, 'tis true, you must be satisfied; there is reason for it. Let me have the keys of the north tower. Filthy knaves, why do you bring them smeared with blood, and twisted with worms? Take them hence, and, ah! the doors open of themselves; 'tis a good omen, my lord; enter first, I entreat you: nay, I would, but these old floors groan so under a man's tread, and if I entered first, you might think they groaned because I trod them."

He went eagerly around the room, touching and pointing to different objects: the countess shrunk from every spot he touched. "See, my lord, see, all is safe. Men will die, and they must be buried; and there will be a deathlike steam, and a mist; a mist, my lord; but these things can be removed, and who will guess them then? Ha!" smiting with fury at the wall, "villains! villains! who has rent open this wall? Who points down that stair? Go not thither, Pallerini; nothing but a lumbering skeleton. Some dry, decayed bones, a sorry sight of mortality. It can tell nothing. Who has heard the dead speak? Ask it not to write, it hath not the means. See, I will touch it: 'tis a fearful sight, but a harmless one. Now, were I the murderer, the blood would gush from the holes of its skull: ha! what is that! who raised its fleshless and clattering arm to smite me on my mouth?—again! again! away, away—where the dead move is no place for us. But you heard yourselves, he did not say I did it." He paused: he waved his arm with a slow commanding air. "Prepare the feast, the wine, the music: but look there be no knives like daggers on the table; and let not the attendants wear those murderers' looks. Ho, there, let us be merry!"

He sunk into his chair, and spread out his arms. "Give me some wine. Ha! who is this? Ascanio! Get thee hence, with that grim, sorry face. Ascanio, I have wished to see thee long, but this is no time, no place—avaunt! why dost thou stand grinning at me? I tell thee this is no time. Noble Pallerini, I pledge you."

He writhed his mouth. Ha! damned portion—what is this? Erminia's blood! Villains! why am I served thus?—and this! What's this before me? a bloody dagger! Why do you all stare distractedly? Wherefore do you laugh, Pallerini? Ha! hold, the taper's here! Blasting lightnings! 'tis Orazio! Erminia, Verdoni, away, break up the feast, the dead are among us. The lights are sulphur, the music is a howl; away, away. Who nails me to my chair? The floor sinks under me! down, down, down. Let me grasp at the air; will nothing hold me? Sinking for ages—lower—lower—lower. My breath—my senses—my sight are gone! Oh! oh!"

He staggered, he shrieked, he awoke; the countess hastened to hold him. "Hush, hush, Monterio, all is well. You are alive; you are awake; you are in my arms." He shook and tottered in her grasp. His eyes were fixed on her; but he saw her not. Her voice was

mixed with the voices of his sleep. Again she spake; again she soothed him in low and cautious whispers. "Am I alive? am I safe? am I only a murderer still? Thank Heaven! my hour is not yet come; my hour of flames and agony."—"Hush, hush, Montorio; be yourself again. Are you unmanned by the fears that visit the infant's sleep by the fantasy of a dream?"—"And are you without fear or distraction? Do you sleep all the long night? Have you no dark dreams, such as visit not an infant's sleep?"—"Often; but I deride them and myself. Often is my sleep broken with horrid starts of fear. Often do I see through my curtains forms with fixed eyes, and forms with none, that glare on me in their emptiness. Often I hear around my bed those low, doubtful, moving sounds which the ear can neither discover to proceed from itself nor from outward objects. Then I shake my curtains, or trim the night-lamp, or mock the terrors that come too late for prevention, and too trifling for remorse."—"Speak no more," said Montorio. "Words of comfort from the mouth of guilt are like the prayers of the wizard, inverted as they are uttered. I would not live this life of horrors, but in the hope to compound for their mitigation in another."

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They sat in silence till near the morning. A light doze, which had fallen on them as they sat, was broken by the opening of the secret door. Again the monk stood before them. They looked upon him with that helpless stupefaction with which we view one who has the secret of our ruin, but over whom we have no influence to secure its concealment. "I have been far distant since," said he. "I have learned much. I would confer with you."

The countess stared with reluctant amaze; but the confessor heeded her not. He prepared to speak; the count pointed to a seat. "No rest for me; I would speak, and ye must hear."—"Speak, then, but speak low; the attendants are in the antechamber," said the countess, "and withdraw your cowl from your face, holy father, for my senses are dull and spent with last night's struggles, and I scarce can hear you."—"Wherefore that request?" said the monk. "None have ever seen my cowl withdrawn, none ever must, till——"

He paused. The count and countess bent forward with concealed faces and fixed ears. The monk began his communications in a low tone, accompanied by violent gesture, and interrupted only by looks of silent ghastliness, which Montorio and his wife exchanged at different periods of it. The communication lasted till the watch-lights burned dull and dim in the blue light that streamed through the curtains. The confessor rose from the chair over which he had bent to whisper. "For this," said he, folding his dark drapery, "your preparation must be instant."—"Fear us not; our demeanour shall evince nothing but ease and tranquillity."—"Pardon me, lady, I never doubted your power of assuming what form or language you needed; but," said the monk, with unheeded irony, "I speak of another preparation. I speak of a place hard to secure, and hard to conceal; of a place where the search of Pallerini might be directed, and where that search might discover a dumb but fearful witness of our secret. Know you of such a place in this castle, lady?"—"He speaks of the north tower, of the burial-hole, on the secret stair."—"Why, why particularise it with such hideous minuteness? Yes, I know it well, holy father; we must anticipate all search there; that body must be removed."—"When, and how, and by whom?" said the monk in a hollow tone. "This following night," said the countess. "And by you," added Montorio. "By me?"—"Ay, by you. Contend not with me, I am a man of wrung and harassed soul. I will not visit those apartments." The few remaining points were adjusted in whispers. The monk retired. The count summoned his attendants, and the castle was soon employed in glad and busy preparation for the arrival of the visitor.

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A day and a night passed in festivity. "I may expect then to meet you in your apartment at midnight, count?"—"I shall attend you, duke." But on that night, while the family were assembled in the hall, the confessor entered and whispered the count, who, startled and agitated, rose, and committing the entertainment to the countess, retired.—"You will not forget your engagement, count?" said the duke, as Montorio passed him, with a solemnity so brief it scarce seemed to borrow a moment from the levity of his mirth. "I go to prepare for it," was the answer. Montorio and the monk retired.

The countess, who felt the necessary claim on her exertions, redoubled them; though she would have almost exchanged her chair of state for a rack to have learned the cause of the

count's absence. Midnight arrived; artificial levity could exist no longer. The countess almost talked to herself; and the duke appeared perplexed and suspicious, when one of the attendants acquainted him that the count was in his apartment. This was the signal of their meeting. The family separated; the duke retired to his own chamber, which, when he conceived the castle was at rest, he quitted for Montorio's.

The count and countess were alone. The duke entered, with two attendants, in silence. The faces, the persons, the manners of the meeting had undergone a sudden and total change. There were no compliments, no gaiety, no polished festivity; the countenances of the group were only marked by different shades of suspicious or sullen gloom, as they betokened the varied characters of the inquisitors and the criminals. The duke advanced.—"Is it necessary," said the count, pointing to the attendants, "is it necessary that your lackeys should witness this extraordinary procedure?"—"I trust," said the duke, "you will regard the circumstance I am about to acquaint you with as an additional proof of the consideration for you which is mingled through the whole procedure. These persons are the officers of justice, disguised as my attendants, and appointed to register the minutes of the examination I am commissioned to institute; others are dispersed through your castle in the same disguise, ready to execute any orders which the event of the examination may render it expedient for me to issue. Under these circumstances, count, you will observe opposition to be perfectly ineffectual; and I trust you commend the delicacy which suggested the expedient."—"Proceed to your commission," replied the count.—"Will not the countess retire?" said the duke. "This is no place for female presence; nor will the terms and objects of our conference be pleasing to her."—"The place where the honour of my family is discussed is the fittest for the mistress of it," replied the countess.

The secretaries seated themselves at a low table in a remote part of the room. The count removed the lights near which he sat, and the rustling of papers was all that interrupted a long and general pause.—"You had a brother, count?"—"I had."—He was married, and had children?"—The count bowed.—"How long is it since that sad and obscure end befel him?"—"Twenty years."—"And during that long period has no inquiry been made, no solicitude excited for the fate of a brother?"—"Pardon me, there needed no inquiry. I was well informed of its mode and circumstance."—"And yet undertook no measure for the punishment of the murderer?"—"The murderer had punished himself; my brother fell by his own hand."

"How! this is contrary both to common report and to the documents now in my possession."—"My brother died by his own hand, in a fit of despair, on the intelligence of his wife's death."—"Her death, then, preceded his: was it also a death of suicide?"—"No: she was pregnant; the terrors of the last eruption, which was twenty years ago, brought on a premature labour; she and her child perished."—"This can, of course, be easily substantiated; a woman of her rank was certainly suitably attended?"—"Her danger was too brief and mortal; she was only attended by the nurse of her children."—"Is she alive?"—"No; she did not long survive her mistress."—"A strange fatality attended all the agents in this affair. The storm of that night had many victims, count. But you mentioned children: how did they disappear?"—"They were conveyed that night to their nurse's sister, lest they should disturb the countess. They died of complaints incidental to infancy."—"How considerate to remove them from the castle on that night. Doubtless their mother enjoyed repose soon after their absence. But, may I inquire, is the woman with whom they died still living?"—"She is," interrupted the countess; "she is now living in the Abruzzo; her name is Tereza Zanetti."—"The air of the Abruzzo is favourable to weak, infantine complaints?"—"We have reason to say so," observed the countess; "our eldest sons, Ippolito and Annibal, were nursed by that woman, and in that cottage, and they are strong and healthy young men."—"To return to the Count Orazio," said the duke; "I have heard he perished in Greece; was the suicide committed there, and by whom, if committed, was it witnessed?"—"A confidential servant was intrusted with the intelligence; but my brother started into madness on hearing it, and dashed himself from a rock, under which he was reposing on his return from a fishing party."—"And of his numerous attendants (for a nobleman would scarcely undertake a journey into Greece alone) were there none that could prevent this catastrophe?"—"He went alone, for he was fond of solitary recreation; Ascanio met him

alone, and the efforts of madness, which often defy numbers, were not to be resisted by a single arm."—"Of course, you soothed your grief for this melancholy event by a public and magnificent memorial; your brother's remains were brought over, and his funeral solemnized by the family?"—"Ascanio, who knew what I would have suffered from the shocking intelligence that the body was so torn and scattered as to be unfit for interment, ordered a funeral, and pretended to bury the remains; I have since heard they were so mangled that was impossible."—"Did no one but the trusty Ascanio see those remains?"—"I was not concerned in the inquiring how many savage fishermen gazed on a carcase."—"You appear, then, by your own confession," said the duke, while the secretaries' pens went fast, "to be ignorant whether your brother perished or not, since, to prove it, you have only the bare report of a solitary menial, who had neither witness nor evidence of his report, and who was capable of deceiving you in the most material part of the event itself. May I ask whether even this Ascanio is yet alive?"—"He has been dead some years."—"Did he die in your service?"—"No; he died abroad, in whose service I know not."—"Strange, the dismission of a servant so useful, so confidential, so considerate."—"If you expect from me the memoirs of every servant I have dismissed, I fear your commission will prove an unsatisfactory one."

A long pause followed; the duke whispered with his secretaries. "You declare, then, you are utterly ignorant of this Ascanio, of his motives for leaving your service, or of any events which may have befallen him since?"—"I declare it."—Count," said the duke, "there are two ways of evading the issue of an inquiry, by partial answerings of an artful structure, or by a sullen and uniform negative: the latter mode is certainly the most safe; for subtilty may be ensnared, and guilt is apt to detect; but an universal disavowal is the shelter of obstinacy. Yet still I fear even this will not avail you; for I have not come unfurnished to this great commission; I have documents, Count Montorio—documents and proofs so powerful."—"That is false," said a voice behind him. The inquirer, the accused, and the attendants, stared in consternation. Beside the chair of the former the monk was discovered standing; his entrance had been observed by none, his face was concealed, and after speaking, he remained so fixed and motionless, that the hearers almost doubted if the voice had proceeded from him. "Who is he that is amongst us?" asked the duke, in a tone that spake the resolution of fear; "speak, whence are you, and wherefore do you come?"—"Whence and wherefore I come," said the monk, without moving limb or muscle, "it matters not; enough that I know your commission and your powers to the uttermost; you have no proofs, and he who has them will not easily delegate them to kings or ministers."—"By what right have you intruded yourself into this presence?" demanded the duke, "or under what powers do you pretend to dispute the exercise of mine?"—"The power under which I act," murmured the monk, "may neither be questioned or controlled. The power which has commissioned me does not act with the infirmity of earthly movements; it does not seek to supply a deficiency of proofs by confidence of assumption, nor make an extorted confession a substitute for the absence of witnesses; it does not leave me, as yours has left you, to shrink from a bold inquiry, and be abased by the upbraidings of falsehood; it empowers, at this moment, to acquit the Count Montorio, and to pronounce there is against him neither witness, accuser, nor proof."—"This is an excellent expedient, count," said the duke, with indignation, "and your confessor, with the assistance of a secret door, plays his part admirably. But your next examination shall be conducted in a place secure at least from the intrusion of presumptuous ecclesiastics." As he spake these words his eyes were directed to the count; but the expression of unguarded astonishment with which the latter viewed his strange defender, undeceived him at once, prepossessed as he was with the belief of some confederacy between them.

"Why will you persist to contend with your conscience," pursued the monk with dogmatical asperity; "I have told you you have no proofs; you have none; they are distant and deep, where none can reach, and such as none can penetrate."—"you admit, then, that there are proofs?" said the duke, with the habitual spirit of availing himself of concessions, though hopeless of any favourable issue from this.—"Yes, there are proofs," said the monk, "but they are not for the sight of day or the knowledge of man; there are proofs, but name them not; for there is a dignity in the supreme of horrors not to be violated by the tongues of common men. For the weak instrument of extrinsic and ineffectual agency there is also a proof: a proof

sufficient that you have neither 'part nor lot in this matter;' that your time is not yet come; and when it does, it will summon you to no such task; such are only for spirits of high elect class. Follow me, and you shall behold this proof."

"The duke looked irresolute; the count and the attendants remained in mute astonishment. "Follow me," repeated the monk, "we must be alone." There was about this man a fearlessness, a careless and melancholy confidence, above humanity; he seemed to walk in a sphere of his own, in a cheerless, unsocial exemption from pain or fear, or everything that can conciliate compassion or sympathy; and never to glance down on the ways or feelings of men but with contempt and infirmity, or indignation for guilt. He possessed a commanding solemnity, that infused enough of terror into his injunctions to render them irresistible; they who listened could not but follow them; and they who followed, followed with a mixture of confidence and of fear almost indescribable.

The duke arose, but glanced at his sword, as if to intimate he was prepared for danger; the wild disdain of the monk's smile was lost in dark folds that concealed his face. The duke and he passed slowly into another apartment. The emotion with which the count and countess had beheld this scene, and now awaited its conclusion, was such as cannot be described. They were restrained from expressing it by the presence of the secretaries, who, amazed and unknowing how to proceed, yet continued in the room. Of the interference of the monk, the motives that prompted it, or the modes which he had adopted to render it ineffectual, they were utterly ignorant; that he was acquainted with their guilt, to them was certain; and it was also certain that he appeared determined to exclude every one else from its knowledge or its prosecution. But in the miserable uncertainty of culprits, they sometimes thought he was only about to make the communication more certain and more terrible by this mode of disclosure; and this fear, which their looks communicated to each other as distinctly as language, was rendered almost intolerable by the impossibility of discussing it freely, or concerting any expedient that might delay or mitigate its danger; a glance or motion, indicative of solicitude, would have degraded that port of offended dignity which they thought necessary to support before the assistants; but they listened with dreadful intentness to the sounds which they imagined issued from time to time from the adjacent room. This state, which they deemed of intolerable length, lasted but a few moments, for the duke rushed from the apartment with horror in his face, and scarce commanding breath to bid the attendants withdraw, made an abrupt and indistinct excuse to the count for his visit and its circumstances. Every doubt, he faltered out, was removed, every suspicion dispelled, and nothing now remained but to apologize for the disturbance he had caused, and to retire. This was done on the approach of morning, leaving the count and countess in security, mingled with amazement and fear.

CHAPTER II.

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"I HAVE brought my harp," said Cyprian; "may I touch it? Shall I read you those lines we found in the grotto of Posilippo? I have coloured that sketch of the Castel Novo you praised; would it amuse you to see it? A dead silence followed each of these questions. Ippolito, to whom they were addressed, remained with clasped hands, and eyes fixed on a point, in utter silence.

"I am very wretched," sighed Cyprian, after a pause, which his companion's absence made to resemble solitude. "That is false," said Ippolito, "and when uttered he knew it to be so." —"Alas, what words are those?" said Cyprian, "and to whom do you talk with such fearful earnestness of look and gesture?"—"Did you not say I was a murderer?" exclaimed Ippolito, starting up. "Blessed Virgin, be calm! no one is here, no one speaks but me."—"And is he not here?" said he, sighing, and gazing vacantly around: "I could have sworn by all the saints I saw him, and he spoke with me but now. But he is ever near me; 'tis strange, Cyprian, but I see him in darkness, I feel him in solitude; he is ever with me."—"It may be so, dear Ippolito; our senses are weak and deceitful organs; mine, I believe, are failing too: even while I speak, you seem different from what you have seemed to me; your voice sounds not like what I have listened to in dear and other hours." He went and sobbed with uncon-

tioned emotion. "It is not true," said Ippolito, who had not heard him; "but let us change the subject. All power is limited by place and time; and the change of those may modify that power. I only say this; because if you should hear of my going to Capua to-night ——"—"To-night! to leave Naples to-night!" exclaimed Cyprian. "Yes," said Ippolito, "to-night, perhaps;" then added, "If the power that pursues me can control the elements—if the hand that is stretched out over me can indeed reach through every part of space—then I must be as one who can struggle no longer; I must shrink into its grasp; and be——"—"Oh, for mercy, for heaven's love, shake me not with these terrible fears! much longer I cannot bear them; what would you be, or do? I will go with you; if you will fly, let me go with you."—"Go with me! never; so may all the visitings of a dark and wayward fate be on my head, as yours escape it." He spoke with solemn tenderness, and laid his hand on Cyprian's head; but Cyprian felt his throat swell, and his head grow giddy: amid all his sufferings, the thought of being deserted by him he loved, had never been suggested to him; and when now it was presented to his mind, he felt as if he had never been unhappy before. An incapacity either to plead or to remonstrate overcame him: with dim eyes and quivering hands, he attempted to follow Ippolito, feebly repeating, "I will fly with you; you said you loved me—take me with you, I will follow you barefoot and in beggary through the world! Did you not say you loved me?" He spoke to the walls—Ippolito was gone; he remained stupified, gasping, and vainly trying to awake from what he felt to be like the spell of a dream. But it was soon dissolved; the clock struck twelve. The thoughts of Montorio's engagement at that mysterious hour rushed on him; he knelt on the ground, and prayed with fresh and fervent sorrow for him, for whom he began to fear his prayer was vain.

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At that hour—the hour of midnight, in a spot which no one knew the site or direction, below the surface of the ground, and assembled by signals and avenues not to be discovered, were collected a number of beings, whose appearance seemed to hold terrible alliance with the place and circumstance of their meeting. Of their forms, many were distorted by those fantastic horrors that startle the sleeper from his dream and visit the eyes of the fearful when left in solitary darkness, and many were involved in a gloom, through which the eye fancied it could trace shapes and shadowings of more unimaginable ghastliness than light could reveal. All were silently and intently employed, but their gestures and movements were so different from life, that how they were employed, might not easily be known. A fitful and unsteady blaze of light played on them as they moved; it issued from a human skeleton which stood in a recess of the vault, around whose bones a pale blue fire quivered without consuming them; and in whose eyeless sockets burned a deep and sullen flame. In other cavities of the walls, a dim, dull light appeared, supplied by tapers which were held by shrivelled human hands, whose deadly yellowness became more visible in the light they dispersed. That light showed many other sights of terror; strange forms and characters were on the walls and roof, over whose dark and measureless extent the eye sought in vain for a point or limit of distance. Some were in motion, with a horrid resemblance of life; others were still as the grave, from which they appeared to be but lately torn. At one extremity, if that could be called so which was quite undefined, hung something that was intended as a separation between that and an interior vault, but of which the eye could not discover whether it was a curtain or a volume of transparent wall, as its massive shadows appeared like the foldings of either. Before it was extended something that resembled an altar, on which a dark cloud brooding, concealed the deed and implements; through it a dull and ghastly light was seen, across which moved the shadows of things still more terrible, and above it was extended the body of a man, blue, livid, and relaxed, as if but lately dead, but the eyes were open, and that glassiness which death only can give, lent them a strange light like life; the right hand was raised, and the finger on the lips, and this posture, with the glazed fixedness of the eyes, gave a speaking and terrible effect to the corse. On a sudden was heard a sound, which resembled what might be supposed to be the effect of a bell tolled in the air, and heard at a vast distance under ground; suspense and doubt were visible in the aspect of the assembly as they listened to it. All employment ceased; they looked dubiously on each other, and around them, as the deep tones died away, awakening echoes to a distance that seemed never to have been visited by sound before. Their suspense was short—another sound succeeded

which was accompanied by the rush of a strong blast; the fires flared and bickered as it swept them—their strong and sudden glow making its noisome chillness more felt. In the dead silence that followed, nothing but the low hissing of the flames was heard, but the next moment they caught the tread of a human foot descending steps; it came nearer and louder—"He is ours for ever," exclaimed the band—and Ippolito rushed into the vault! . . .

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From his short, uneasy sleep, Cyprian had been often roused that night by sudden noises in the palace; but they were so mixed with those of his sleep, that he believed both to be the same, and tried to compose himself again: he was awakened from that late and heavy slumber, to which those who pass restless nights are accustomed, by a servant inquiring at what hour he preferred dinner, as it was near noon; with some surprise at the inquiry, he referred it to their master. "The signor is gone," replied the man, "and we are ordered to take directions from you."—"Gone!" shrieked Cyprian, "whither? when? how? speak!"—"Whither, or how, signor, none of us know," replied the servant; "he left Naples about two hours after midnight, attended by only one servant; you might have heard the noise of his departure, for we were all roused on his return; and——perhaps, signor, this letter which he left for you will explain."—"I heard the noise of his departure," exclaimed Cyprian, "I heard and did not feel he was going; wretch, miserable wretch!" He opened the letter eagerly; the contents did not contribute to diminish his emotion.

"From a persecution which, though hopeless to escape, I am yet unable to endure, I fly, whither I know not, nor does it matter: he that drives me hence can pursue me everywhere. I am hopeless of resistance or escape; yet I will fly, for I will be no easy prey. I will run to my chain's full length, and grapple with that, and make it a means of respite, if not release. Some dreadful fate will befall me; cut off from the flush and joy of life, which never mortal loved as I did, and dragged to——Oh, that it were possible to compound for the misery, and escape the guilt! Oh, that I might be a wanderer and a vagabond on the face of the earth, and never know habitation or rest, or quiet of domestic dearness, so I might shun but that! I know not whither I go. I will write to you, but write not to me, for I shall probably remain in no place longer than a night. Besides, the direction might betray me. Alas! what does human device avail against him with whom I have to contend? Farewell, beloved Cyprian, my madness and misery have not left me one tear to shed, one tender thought to think of you. There was a time when I would not——but I am hot, and reckless, and insensate; yet oh! for your patience, your long-suffering love, your submissive and wife-like affection and fidelity, what shall I give you back? I am a heart-smitten and harassed man; I cannot pray; I will not bless you, for I am cursed with a curse! MONTORIO."

The servant, at the conclusion of the letter, informed Cyprian that, by the signor's orders, the establishment was to be maintained for him in the same style, and his orders were to be absolute in the household. Cyprian heard him not. The whole of that dreadful day he passed in a kind of stupefaction, that did not yet exclude sensibility of pain. Montorio, his name and presence, had always seemed to him so necessary to his existence, that now he was, in his absence, scarcely conscious of life. He wandered from room to room, with a face of busy vacancy, that sought everywhere for an object for whose absence it bore an expression of helplessness and dismay inconceivable.

Towards evening, in mere bodily weakness, he sunk on a sofa, and felt recollection return by increasing pain. It grew dark, and a servant entering, announced that a stranger was proceeding to the apartment, without informing any of the attendants of his name or intentions. Cyprian was alarmed, yet too feeble to make any inquiry or preparation, when the stranger entered the room, and motioned to the servant to withdraw. The light was dim, but Cyprian, in his striking air, discovered a resemblance to the house of Montorio. He advanced, "I feel that, in this house," said he, "I ought to be secure; yet I enter it in doubt and in fear."—"In the house of Montorio, signor cavalier," said Cyprian, "every man of honour is secure."—"I have claims," said the stranger, hesitating, "which it were better perhaps to conceal, yet the tones of your voice bid me trust you. This must be Cyprian. I am Annibal di Montorio."—"Annibal!" echoed Cyprian, wild with joy, "Annibal, oh fly, follow him, bring him back! Or have you found him? is he with you? Speak, speak of him!"—Annibal

started. "Where is Ippolito? I came to him for shelter, where is Ippolito?"—"Oh!" said Cyprian, retreating and sick with fear, "is he not with you? I thought, I hoped you had known his movements. You are his brother, and when I saw you, I——Oh! do you not know, then, where he is?" You amaze me, you alarm me. I knew not of his absence. I flew to him for refuge from danger and extremity. I am scarce safe in his absence. Yet how shall I follow him, when you know not where he is? Tell me," collecting his habitual caution, "are the present domestics recently engaged? and are they natives of the city?"—"I believe they are?"—"Then I am safe for some time at least. But I am worn and overwatched; I have lurked in the forest all day; let me have some refreshment, and let my own servant only, who has escaped with me, be employed about us; you shall learn all, all I know, and all I fear. My brother reposes unlimited confidence in you." Cyprian obeyed him, trembling with unsatisfied solicitude and expected calamity.

Refreshments were procured, and Annibal eat his silent meal in secresy and fear, attended by Cyprian, who could scarce suppress his inquiries; and by Filippo, who could hardly contain his communications, from the joy he felt at his own and his master's escape, as well as triumph in the dexterity he had exerted to effect it.

Lights had been introduced with the same caution, and Filippo had departed. Annibal rose. He examined the room; he secured the doors; he drew a stiletto from his vest and laid it with his pistols on the table. Cyprian beheld his preparations with an oppressing sensation of fear. Annibal returned; he traversed the room, listening to the steps of the domestics as they passed through the rooms. The echo of the last had ceased; all was silence. Midnight arrived; Annibal looked round him with an expression of security; then resuming his seat by Cyprian, and pressing his forehead with the air of a man who struggles through weakness and weariness to collect facts whose weight burdens his faculties, said—"My brother's value for you justifies the communications I am about to make. No power but confidence could extort them from me. They are wonderful, dark, and perilous; nor do I know what danger you may incur by becoming a partaker of them. But by comparing our mutual information on this dark topic, something may be known which silence would have concealed. Or, perhaps, I am only yielding to the natural weakness of an oppressed mind. A dark and doubtful way is before me. I must tread it alone, without guide and without companion; and before I go I would willingly leave with another what my own tongue may never be permitted to tell. I would willingly think that my memory may not be lost in oblivion as my life will probably be. I will, therefore, relate the circumstances that have, within the last four months, befallen Ippolito and me. With the latter he informed me you were unacquainted; indeed with both, except those effects which it was impossible to conceal."

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Annibal had proceeded thus far in his narrative when he observed Cyprian had no longer the power of listening. In an agony of terror and devotion he flung himself on the ground, and called on the saints to forgive and to plead for the unhappy wanderer. Annibal joined him with equal, though calmer devotion, mentally mingling his own name in his aspirations. "It is now finished," said Cyprian, as he rose from his knees, "it is all told; is it not?" Annibal shook his head. "Merciful Heaven! what! more horrors! worlds would not bribe me to listen to them for another hour."—"Not more than half an hour has elapsed since I began the narrative," said Annibal. "It has seemed to me a term of dreadful length," said Cyprian; "yet though I cannot listen to more, I can speak of none but him; let us sit all night, and talk where he may be fled."—"Where he has fled," said Annibal, "it is now perhaps impossible to know. I had proposed, on my escape from the castle, to have come to him, and persuaded him to accompany me to France; the martial spirit of Louis the Fourteenth, and of his government, holds out an encouragement to young and brave adventurers; and abroad, if the hand of Heaven be not stretched out over us for evil, we might forget our country, our name, and those disastrous hauntings that seem to be inseparable from them."—"And have you then experienced a similar persecution? Have you been driven also from your home? "This is most horrible," said Cyprian; "is it a fiend that haunts your house?"—"It is a fiend," said Annibal, gloomily, "whom no power can chase from his prey; whom no exorcist can subdue; a craving fiend who will have blood!"

He rose, and tossed his arms eagerly, and strode across the room. "Cyprian, horrid thoughts are besetting me; yes, I will hasten to France; I have relatives, too, there; my breath is choked, my heart cannot beat here. But I must at least stay to-morrow; to-day I might say, (for see, the dawn has broke upon our melancholy talk,) for I can only travel by night. If you are not yet weary of these things, wild and dark—things that defeat the reason, and make even fancy shudder—I will tell you a tale of such—I will tell you what has befallen me."—"Go on," said Cyprian, in a voice of hollow strength; "I can hear anything now."—"No, not now," said Annibal, shrinking from his own proposal: "I will now take a little rest; I will throw myself on this sofa. Lay those pistols near me, Cyprian, and loosen that dagger in its sheath; how you tremble! stay, I will do it myself." He flung himself on the sofa; but starting up a moment after, asked Cyprian would he not try to sleep? "I am too anxious for you to sleep," said Cyprian; let me go into the antechamber, where the slightest noise will reach me, and I can sooner rouse you."—"This is a wretched substitute for sleep, for quiet, unsuspicious rest, to lie down pillowed on daggers, and starting up to catch the step of the assassin. I doubt nevertheless my short sleep will be calm and deep; I have a stern tranquillity within me suited to the time." He permitted Cyprian to go into the outer room, locked the door, and composed himself again to rest.

CHAPTER III.

"Why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
Against the use of nature?"—MACBETH.

During the day Annibal gave to Cyprian some papers, which contained an account of what had recently befallen him, after briefly sketching to him what was first necessary to be known, viz. the subject of his former correspondence with Ippolito. "Where this is deficient," said he, at the close, "I can supply it by narrative. It was written in solitude and durance; you must therefore expect a simple detail of lonely individual feelings; variety was precluded by the barrenness of utter solitude, and embellishment by the absence of all solicitude about a manuscript, which I thought would never become visible till its writer was no more.

"It was on the second night after Pallerini's arrival at the castle that I took the resolution Filippo had suggested to me, of visiting the tower. When I look back on the expectations I had formed of this circumstance and its consequences, and compare them with what has actually befallen, I can scarce be assured of my own identity. I can scarce think that the being then, whose mind was but partially tinged with fear and curiosity; whose expectations were balanced by incredulity, and whose credulity was again alarmed by experience; who was in that suspended state in which fear is not too powerful, nor solicitude too severe; can be the being now, whose mind is made up, whose feeling is tense, and the terrors of whose fate have appeared to him without cloud or shadow; without mitigation or medium; whose knowledge is without bounds; whose fear is without hope; who has no relief of human uncertainty, no shelter of natural obscurity. On that night we supped in the great corridor; it was intensely hot. I observed the duke and my father deeply engaged in conversation, and quitted the table unnoticed. I went to my apartment, where I expected Filippo would soon join me; but he was there already, his dark eyes full of something. I had often seen them marked with curiosity and wonder; never before with fear. He anticipated my questions. 'Oh, signor, strange things are doing within these walls to-night; things that would never come into the thought of man are passing near us, frightfully near us (drawing close to me and whispering); you will scarce believe what I have seen, signor.'—'What have you seen, Filippo?' said I, laying down the light. 'The confessor; the confessor, signor. I knew it long ago; I told the count; would to heaven the Inquisition had him; would to St Agatha the primate cardinal of Naples had to deal with him! There was an old Carthusian in the village where I was born, who would feel the presence of a spirit before a taper had burned blue; and banished from his convent a stubborn imp who had defied holy water, and even Latin, ever so long. Oh! would he were but to meet this monk, I warrant he would find him other employment than lurking in vaults, and mingling with the dead, and . . . . '—'Filippo, you must be composed; if you have anything to relate, relate without wanderings and ex-

aggeration; the time is a solemn one; nor do I wish my mind to be disturbed from the object I have fixed it on.'—'Signor, I will not exaggerate; I will tell you what I have really—— but forgive me if I tell it with many starts of fear. Remember it is midnight; and that I am speaking of things fearful to think of, even at noonday; and forgive me——You know, signor, how suspicious I have been of that father Schemoli, as he calls himself, though all that ever knew him say they never saw father, mother, or relative, or any one that owned him; but that a few years back, when he took the vows in the Dominican convent in Gaeta, they talked of his having been first seen by some wretched fishermen, after a terrible storm, all in a blaze of lightning, perched on a crag of a little desolate island in the Grecian sea; but this is nothing to the purpose.'—'I wish you could have remembered that, Filippo.'—'Well, signor, I have always watched and feared him; and after I saw him last night visibly pacing down that passage to the north tower, I felt assured that he was connected some way with the strange noises and strange reports I heard of that tower. So, signor, all day I sought him through the castle; for I have a strange desire, signor, to look into the eyes and face of one whom I suspect of anything. I always think I discover something by it; but all was in vain.

"'At length I bethought myself, and it was a bold thing, for some of the people of the castle would as soon enter the hole of scorpions as approach that room—I bethought myself of going to his chamber. I knew the partitions and doors there were crazy; and I thought, through some chink or crevice, I might get a sight of him, perhaps strangely employed. Now, signor, you have learning, and could perhaps explain your feelings better; but I had a strong thought, an audible voice, as it were, in my mind, that seemed to tell me if I went it would not be in vain: it was as plain as if one of those pictures spoke from its frame to me: it was strange to me, and yet it gave me courage. I went about mid-day, when most of the family were asleep. I stole softly along, holding my breath, and looking round me, though there was no one near me; yet when I came to the very door, I could not help glancing behind me to see if he were close to me; for I had a feeling as if he had been stealing along with me the whole way, and would just grip me as I came to his door. All was quiet—the passage empty, the door closed. I heard a little noise in his room, often ceasing, and often repeated, as if the person within was engaged in something that he would every now and then quit to prevent being overheard. I tried a thousand places to get a convenient view of the room: at length I fixed on one behind an old picture, in a waste recess; for all that part of the west turret is waste and dreary, and they say he therefore chose it for himself. I had a full view of him; he sat with his cowl thrown back: never, but in my dreams the time I had a fever, have I beheld such a face. One arm was extended, and I saw, by his whole frame, that he was talking with earnest, and, as it were, angry gesture, (as he might do in the confessional, when reproving a penitent,) though I believed him alone. I changed my posture at the crevice to spy who could be with him; and I saw—yes, signor, with these eyes I saw——'—'Hush, hush, Filippo! more than me will hear your information.'—'Then, signor,' creeping to me on tiptoe, 'you must let me whisper, for I feel I shall shriek telling, if I do not.'—'Tell it any way, only proceed.'—'I saw, blessed mother! a skeleton, seated in a chair opposite to him, plain and erect, with all that horrid quietness, as if it was the ordinary visit of a companion. My eyes grew dim. I had rather have seen him rending and abusing those dead bones, as they say the men of the unholy art do; for to sit face to face, in broad daylight, as man sits with man, with the decayed remains of the grave, with an object so loathsome to the eyes of flesh. . . . . Oh! it gave me a more ghastly thought of him than the night I saw him in the vaults of the old chapel. I could not bear to behold him. I stole away again, and, as I went, there came a hollow clattering sound from the room, as if that strange object was in motion. I hurried on, and scarce thought myself safe till I had got down the great stairs, and saw, at a secure distance, the little narrow oratory window, like a hole in a wizard's den.'—'It was indeed a ghastly sight, Filippo; but what is this to our present purpose? light that other lamp, and follow me.'—I was hastening away.—'Stay, stay, signor, this is not all. Oh, these are fearful things to pass so near us, and to pass unnoted too! to think that we are in the next chamber to a being whose dealings are with the dead; for to-night, signor, to-night again I saw him.'—'Forbear those gestures, Filippo, they tell of worse things than your story.'—'Oh, it was just so, signor! I felt my arms raised, and my teeth grinding, and my very eyebrows stretched up to my forehead, when I saw him to-night coming along the passage, from

his room.'—'Why do you throw yourself thus in his way, if the only effect is fear?'—'I could not help it, signor; I felt I could not help it; I wished myself far off, but I could not move: he came on slowly, as if he were encumbered; he saw me not—those high windows give so little light, and I had shrunk just under one of them. I thought, as he passed, I heard other sound beside his steps: I looked after him, and under his garments the dead feet were peeping out. Oh! he is a creature in whom are so strangely mixed what belongs to the living and what to the dead, that we know not who it is we see when he crosses us, nor what he will prove while we are yet looking at him. I followed him, though I scarce knew whither I was going, nor felt the floor under me. He went down some steps to the left, where you know, signor, there is supposed to be a passage that has been long shut up, but where the wall is as blank and solid as this. Then I thought I should see something that would last me to tell of all my life, that the wall would open to receive, or the floor sink under, or a huge black hand be held out to him, or at least there would be a smell of sulphur as he disappeared.'—'Well, well, but what did you really see?'—'I followed still, signor; I know not how I felt; but I followed; when, suddenly, turning on me, blessed saints! it was not the monk; a skeleton head stared at me; a bare decayed arm beckoned me backward. I retreated fast enough; but I dared not turn my back, while it was in sight, lest it should pursue me. It is more than an hour since I saw it, yet I see it still; everywhere, on the walls, on the ceilings; when the light falls strong, even I see it. I see it when I close my eyes; the deep, dark holiowness of the empty brow will never leave me.'—'Filippo, is this your preparation to accompany me; to talk yourself into terrors about an object which, whether supernatural or not, has no connexion with us, nor with our purpose to-night?'—'Will you go to the tower to-night, signor?'—'I am going, Filippo.' I rose and took the lamp, for I knew it was easier to work on fear by shame than by argument, and I felt a rising disinclination to go in alone. Oh! we are all, in every state of existence, in every stage of intellect, the slaves of an inward dread of futurity and its beings. The wisest of us, in the very pith and pride of our wisest moods, will suddenly feel himself checked and oppressed by an influence caught from the remembrances of childhood, the dream of sickness, the vision of night or solitude; from the story, the monition, the bare hint of the menial or the crone, the humblest inferior in rank and in intellect, at the strength of which he laughs, shudders, and submits. Filippo followed me in silence, ashamed to repeat his fears, yet displeased they were put to another trial. Ippolito (for to you I address these pages, though doubtful you will ever see them), you must yourself feel the hushed step, the stifled breath, the suspicious and lowered glance of the eye that accompanies these movements, before their effect can be described to you. We came to the door of the passage; we tried, and found it open. At another time this circumstance would have struck me with surprise; but I was now so occupied by strange expectation, that I regarded it merely with that blind satisfaction which one feels at an object being unexpectedly facilitated to them. As we entered the passage, however, an unpleasant sensation arose within me. The first and the last time I had trodden it before, poor Michelo had been my conductor; the unfortunate old man whom either my curiosity or my fear had actually killed. With an involuntary motion I raised my lamp to Filippo's face, to discover if my companion was changed; for I had felt a change in my own perceptions, that would prepare me for, and justify my strange appearance at the moment; and twice or thrice, not unconsciously, yet unwillingly, I heard myself call him Michelo. 'Do not call me Michelo while we are here, signor;' and I was angry and disturbed at his mentioning the name, though I had uttered it first, and giving him the pain he only wished removed.

"With many such crossings of mind, sometimes resisted, and sometimes resisted in vain, we reached the apartments. The doors were open there too; but I endeavoured to withdraw my mind from every lesser notice, to still the flutter and variety of my thoughts, and fix them singly on the search of the apartments, and on the discovery of any circumstances that might attend their being opened and visited on the preceding night. I passed through both apartments slowly, looking around me, but discovering nothing I had expected to see. Filippo followed still slower, with the lingering of fear, holding the lamp high, and confining his eye to that part of the room where the light fell clear. But in the second apartment I perceived the panel removed. The circumstances of my last visit rushed on my mind; I moved mechanically towards it; but Filippo, when he saw me actually entering it, could contain no

longer. 'Ah, signor, how well you seem to know all these places. And will you, indeed, go down that passage that looks like a passage to the grave (he shuddered)? If I entered it, I should think the door would close on me, and shut me into that dark cavern hole for ever. I should think (holding the light over it with a shaking hand) to find the decayed bones of some poor wretch whose end no one ever knew, thrown in one of those dusky nooks.' I was disturbed at his unconsciously reviving every image I wished to banish, for I felt that if I suffered my mind to pause over every fearful suggestion of memory or fancy, my resolution would be exhausted, and the moment of trial, if one was approaching, find me unprepared.

"I took the lamp from him, and bidding him wait in the apartment, began to descend the steps. 'Pardon me, signor,' said he, following me eagerly, 'if there be danger, you shall not encounter it alone.' I easily persuaded him to stay, however, for I had no wish that he should witness all I had seen or know all I know. His mind was too quick and tenacious to see the object I had formerly seen there, without drawing conclusions, perhaps too strong; and I felt in the sense of his being so near me, a sufficient balance for dreary and utter loneliness.

"I went down the passage alone, my lamp burning dim in the thick air. I would have hurried through it, without suffering my eye to glance beyond the limits of the light I carried; but I was come to search, and I felt myself impelled to do it. The opening of the panel door and the passage could be ascribed to no common cause. I soon found the place where I had discovered the skeleton; it was open and empty; the cavity remained in the wall, the rubbish appeared to have been lately scattered about; but there was no vestige of its former tenant.

"I felt myself fixed to the spot. The current of my thoughts ran like cross-set streams, dark and disturbed, and thwarting, and each perplexing me with brief predominance. I was yet hanging over the spot, indulging in doubt and fear, yet believing that I was dissolving them, when I saw Filippo above, bending over the steps, and beckoning to me. I could not soon disengage myself, for my mind was intensely occupied, and I resisted his impatient motions, as the sleeper resists the effort to awake him; but before his fear could become distinct, I heard feet approaching, and saw other lights above. The steps were light and quick; I felt this was no spectre, and hastened up with a thousand feelings and intentions. They were driven back, crushed, silenced, in a moment. I beheld my father and his confessor already in the room. Oh, how many thoughts were with me in that moment's pause! My own situation and fears were forgotten. Michelo's hints, our joint discoveries, my father's character and habits, the well-watched secresy of those bloody rooms.....Ippolito, you are my brother; my suspicions have since been but too well justified, or I would sooner perish than write thus. But what have I known since! what have I yet to tell! Though these thoughts were so busy, so remote, yet I felt my eyes involuntarily, and even painfully fixed on his; their expression was terrible; the monk was behind, holding up a taper in his bony hand; his face was in the shade. 'Annibal,' said my father, with the broken voice of smothered rage, 'why are you here?' I was silent, for no language could relieve the tumult of my thoughts. 'Wretch, rebel, parricide,' bursting out, 'why are you here, and who conducted you?' I was roused by his rage. 'Why, is it a crime,' said I, 'to be here?'—'That you shall know,' said he, fiercely, 'by its punishment at least.' He turned round, and turning, saw Filippo, seemed to start into madness, and drew his sword, and rushed on him with a force which the other scarce avoided by a sudden bound; but the motion was so vehement, that the sword stuck in the wall, and remained fixed. Though disarmed, he again flew on him, and, but for the monk and me, would have dashed him down the steps, or strangled him against the wainscot. Oh! it is horrible to hold the straining arms, and look on the bloodshot eye and blue writhed lip, and hear the hoarse roar of a man rendered a fiend by passion. 'Villain,' said he, foaming, and scarcely held, ''tis to such as you I owe my being thus persecuted, suspected, slandered; that my castle seems like a prison, and I tremble to meet the eyes of my own servants. You crouch over your fires, hinting treason to each other, till every owl that whoops from my battlements seems to call me murderer.'—'Hush, hush! this is madness,' said the monk, in a peculiar accent.—'Follow me,' said my father, resuming his sullen state. 'Where is my sword?' His eye fell on the place where it was fixed; the light which the monk hastily held up, fell strongly on his face. For millions I would not have had within my breast a heart that could hold any alliance with such a face as his for a moment became. The

sword was fixed in the wall, where the stain of blood was so deep and strong. With an eye (which he seemed unable to withdraw or to close) terribly fastened to the spot, turn him and, faintly and inwardly, 'Will no one give me my sword? will no one approach that wall?' The monk drew it out, and gave it to him. He turned away with the effort of one who would raise his head and dilate his chest, and stride proudly forward; but his step was unequal, and his whole frame was shaken. He bid us follow him sternly, and quitted the apartment. I had no means of resistance, and was so lost in thought, that of myself I thought not at all. The monk who bore the light, lingered a moment, as if to see us quit the room; when my father called from the passage, 'Come quickly, father; I am in darkness, I am alone; father, I say, come quickly.' His voice gradually rose, as if something he feared was rapidly approaching him: it almost became a shriek. The monk hurried out, and we followed him. My father placed himself in the midst of us as we descended the stairs. I can give you no account of my feelings at this time; they were dark, mingled, strange. I believe there was danger impending over me; but what it was, I could neither measure nor calculate. Ignatio, will you censure, or will you wonder at me? If I can recollect the state of my mind at that time, the predominant sensation was pleasure; pleasure indeed of a powerful, gnawing character, but certainly pleasure. The discovery I had formerly made seemed so fully confirmed by my father's manner of us: his rage, his terror, and a thousand other circumstances I now remarked with the utmost local correction, that whether it was from pride in my own sagacity and perseverance, or from the malignant satisfaction that the cause of our misery was discovered, or from both these sensations, I cannot tell, but I felt myself [illegible] and [illegible] to be [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

squalid lassitude, the helpless vacancy of solitary confinement, when time flows on without mark or measure, when light and darkness are the only distinctions of day and night instead of employment and repose—when, from the torpor of inexertion, man feels himself growing to, and becoming a part of the still, senseless things about him, as the chains. that have eat into his wasted limbs, have begun, from cold and extinguished sensation, to feel like a part of them—that—oh! that to beings of thought, of motion, of capacity, what is it? The uneasy consciousness of life without its powers—the darkness of death without its repose.

"When the first tumult of my mind had subsided, and I felt I was really left to myself, I began to inquire what resources I had, for I shuddered at the idea of total vacany. I had no books, no pen, no instrument or means of drawing; all I could do was to think, to examine into my mind, and live on the stores of acquirement. I had read and thought more than young men of my age usually do, and the exclusion of outward things I endeavoured to think would rather assist than impede my efforts to plunge into the depth of thought. But a short time convinced me how different the employment is that is sought for amusement and the employment that is wooed for relief. I could not think. Whatever train of thought I tried to weave, whether light or solid, became immediately tasteless and declined into absence. A monotonous musing that yet had no object, no point, nothing to quicken reflection, that hung silently on the objects around, without drawing image or inference from them, succeeded to every attempt at mental exertion. Here all extrinsic relief was precluded. He that is weary may throw away his book, or change his companion, or indulge meditation without the fear of vacancy; but I could not. My labour must be without remission or variety, or my dejection without hope. How long I strove, and how sadly I desisted! I even tried to form an inward conference, to raise objections, and to construct answers, but my powers of reasoning sunk within me. I endeavoured to interest myself in the subject, to taste pleasure where I was conscious I had felt it before—to believe important what I had often contended for as so, but all was cold, shadowy, remote. I could bring nothing into contact with my mind, yet I felt that what interposed I was interested in keeping as remote as I could. At length I spake aloud to myself, in hopes of forcing attention and interest. I tried to assent, and object, and interrupt, with a sickly affectation of the warm and vivid debates of society. The accents faltered involuntarily on my tongue, and while I was apparently talking with eagerness, my eyes and mind were mechanically fixed on the door and windows, whose height was so remote, so unassailable.

By design, I am convinced the monk visited me but once a day; but once a day had I the satisfaction of seeing even that cheerless face, of hearing even that slow, unsolacing tread. There is no telling with what delight I waited even that, and how I listened to hear the rusty wards long resisting the key, that I might longer feel the presence of a human creature (as I believed) near me; how I protracted the preparations for the meal he brought, that I might compel him to continue longer in my sight; how I multiplied questions, hopeless of answer, merely because it was more like human conference to see the person you spoke to; how I rose from my untasted food to watch even his departing steps, and to pause, with piteous sagacity, whether it was the echo of the last, or the last but one, I heard. But all this was tranquillity to what I underwent at night. During the day I had the power of ranging through every part of my mind, and examining its gloomiest recesses without fear; but the first shadow on the deep arches of my windows was the signal for my shutting out every idea, wild, and solemn, and fantastic; everything that held alliance with such feelings as the place was but too ready to suggest. I measured the narrow circle of my thoughts with the fearful caution of one who steals along a passage with the apprehension that an assassin is about to rush on him at every turning. When the dark hour came, which no aid of artificial light, no lingerings of grateful shade, made lovely, then I ceased to look around me; for the dim forms, so fixed by day, began to move in the doubtful light, and often I threw off my mantle, as I was wrapping it round my head, lest some other noise was couched in its rustling; but though the darkness around me was ever so deep, I felt there could be stillness without repose, and oppression without weariness. I could not sleep; I lay awake to watch my thoughts, and to start, with instinctive dread, when any of them declined towards the circumstances of the last night. When I did doze, the habit was communicated to my sleep, and I started from my dreams when those images recurred in them. After the experience of

the first night I determined to earn sleep, at least by bodily fatigue. The limits of my room admitted of many modes of exercise, and I, you know, am strong and active. At every hour then, as nearly as I could guess, I rose to take exercise; and oh, how dreary was it to rise to a solitary task; no stimulus of competition, of elastic spirits, any object proposed, or any prize held out, desired and contended for by others. I did rise, and work myself into a fever of motion. I perceived, however, when I was in that tumultuous and bounding state, in which the movements are in a manner involuntary, that mine all tended to climbing. Once I had scrambled up the rugged wall with amazing tenacity; but I quitted my hold as soon as I was conscious of it, for of such a means of escape I knew there was no hope. But when I ceased (the motion given to the spirits and blood by violent exercise seems communicated to other objects; and after it the performer looks around him, a consciousness of cheerfulness, that everything else seems to partake; trees and fields dance and wave to the eye); but when I had ceased, there was no cheering voice. The echo of the noise I had made moaned long and heavily among the passages, and the walls looked so still, so dark, so unmoved, as if they scowled contempt on the puny effort to escape even the thought of their influence, to make the movements of health and freedom in a prison. I looked around me dismayed; I almost expected to hear a burst of ghastly laughter break on my ear; I almost expected to see the forms of those (if there be such) who love to haunt and watch the miseries of a prison, to scare the short sleep of the captive, to shape to him, in the darkness of his cell, forms that wait for the hour of rest to steal on him; to send to his grating the faces and whispers of those he loves; and when he starts from his straw to thrust to the bars some misshapen visage that makes mock at him. Oh, how pregnant with fearful imagery is solitude! At length I bethought myself of the resources I had read of others employing in lonely durance. The thought of the little personal application with which I had read them was bitter to me. But, on the third night, I began to notch a panel in my door with my knife, with the number of days I had been confined; but when the thought of my being thus utterly a captive—of my being so soon compelled to the very habits and movements of those who have wasted years in the sickness of deferred hope, the lingering death of protracted solicitude—the knife fell from my hand, and I burst into tears. Oh, let none talk—henceforth talk, of the powers of which the mind becomes conscious in solitude—of the utility of seclusion, and the discoveries which an inward acquaintance delights us with. Solitary man is conscious of nothing but misery and vacancy; it is the principle hostile and loathsome to nature, the lethargy of life, the grave of mind.

"Such was the general state of my feelings during my confinement. On the eleventh night, when they supposed me subdued by weariness, or impatience of confinement, as I was composing myself to rest, I thought I heard a step. I started up in hope and fear. It came near. No words can tell the state of mingled feeling with which I heard it certainly approach; saw light through the crevices of the door; heard the key turn it, and its hinges grate. Freedom could hardly repay me for such a moment—it was my father!

"He approached with a slow, and, I thought, a timid step, holding up the light he bore, and glancing his eye around wistfully and intently. I thought I saw others without. When he spied me he bore up proudly, and I endeavoured to rouse myself to the conference. 'Annibal,' said he, setting the light down, and fixing his eye on me, 'you find I am not to be provoked with impunity.'—'I find,' said I, 'you can, at least, punish without provocation, or wherefore am I here? for visiting a part of my paternal habitation? for going where I could neither intrude nor alarm?'—'That it was my will these apartments should not be opened, should have been enough for you; from whom can I expect obedience if my own children bribe my servants to transgress my orders? And what,' said he, after a pause, 'what have you gained by your rebellion? What have you seen or done that was worth risking my displeasure? Now is your curiosity gratified? You have seen nothing but dust and decay; nothing but what any other ruin could show you.' There was such an unnatural calmness in his voice that I was roused from my sullen negligence. I looked up; his eye was bent on me with a look so peculiar as recalled at once his last words, and unfolded their meaning. I conceived at once that these questions were suggested to discover what I had seen, and done, and discovered; whether I had found anything which other ruins do not always conceal.

"The discovery that he was come, not to pity or to liberate, but to sift and examine

whom he believed confinement had tamed and enfeebled, at once depressed and strengthened me; my whole mind was roused and revolted by this treachery. He appeared to me not as a father but an assassin, taking every advantage of a disarmed victim, and I determined to resist him with every remaining power, and send him back abashed and defeated. Nor was I without hope of retaliating on him; for I had often heard of discoveries, which it was the labour of thought to conceal, being made in the sudden confusion of rage, or the answer to an unexpected reply.

"'Whatever discoveries I made,' said I, 'I should, at least, suppose your lordship was not interested in, and therefore could not suppose them the cause of your displeasure.'—'You have then made discoveries,' said he, impatiently; 'and why is it presumed that I am not interested in them?'—'I should, at least, hope you were not,' said I, with malicious pleasure; 'but as your lordship has informed me there were no discoveries to be made—that I could see nothing more than what other ruins might contain, I must imagine that all I beheld was either an illusion or a trifle—and in either how can you be interested?'

"His eye kindled, and his lip shook. 'Insolent wretch, you mock me—you exult in rebellion, because you imagined my power of punishing exhausted! but you are deceived. I have other terrible means—others that you dream not of; drive me not to resort to them. Remember they will not be temporary, for they are not employed to extort confession, but to punish obstinacy. No; I need not your confession, foolish boy; I know everything you can know, and an explanation of them which you do not know; but I wish you to confess, that I may have an excuse for forgiving you, and remitting your punishment. Tell me, therefore, how often you went with that lying dotard whom death has fortunately sheltered from my resentment—tell me what he said to you, and what he showed you—tell me——.'

"He stopped as if he was betraying his expectation of too much. The impulse I felt at that moment I could not resist; I sat up, and fixing my eyes on him, 'If I told you,' said I, 'you would either aggravate my confinement, or place me where there is a quiet exemption from all pain.' But when the impulse was gratified, I felt that what I had said was dangerous and foolish, and I withdrew my eyes from him in confusion. 'If,' said he, in the voice of one determined to sacrifice his passions to his object, 'if I am thus formidable, why do you not fear me? Nor would you fear me in vain; reflect how extensive my power is, and reflect you are within it. The resistance you have hitherto been enabled to make, you falsely ascribe to an imaginary strength of mind and principle which, you conceive, no trial can subdue. Believe me, it is only owing to your trial having been not yet severe.' My heart sunk within me. 'You have been nursed in luxury, Annibal, and in the indulgence of a romantic spirit of contemplative seclusion; for you, therefore, solitude has no pains while unaccompanied by those privations that ought to mark it as a state of punishment. While your food is plenteous and palatable, and your means of rest and warmth commodious, solitude will be employed to subdue you in vain; but if these stimulants of fictitious courage be withdrawn—if light, and warmth, and ample space, and liberty, be denied you, you will find the courage, which you imagined the permanent offspring of principle, the short-lived dependent of local causes, too mean to enter into the account of the high motives of a hero in chains.'

"My heart sunk within me as he spoke. How keenly true was his remark! how superfluously cruel his irony! Oh, it is easy to resist those who are armed only with the common weapons of infliction, whose blows can be calculated and averted, who strike at parts that are exposed to and prepared for common and daily assault; but when the torturer approaches you, armed with a superior knowledge of your nature, when he knows exactly what nerve will answer with the keenest vibration of pain, what recess of weakness you most wish guarded and concealed, what are the avenues and accesses to all the most intimate and vital seats of suffering in your nature, then—then is the pain—then is the hopeless fear—the despairing submission. Such I felt, yet such I still wished to conceal.

"'I know you,' said I, 'to have great power, and I believe you have no mercy. Yet still I think I am not destitute of resources. My mind is yet unbroken, my resentment of oppression is inveterate, and my conscience is void of offence. This is my great stay and grasp. I will not declaim about the delights of innocence in a dungeon; 'tis ridiculous, and unlike nature. I shall probably undergo much; but what I shall undergo will, I am convinced, be rendered tolerable by the great aids I have mentioned. I will not sleep better on flint than

on down; but, till my health is destroyed, I shall sleep calmly; nor will I be afraid, as long as my dim light lasts, to look into the nooks and hollows of my dungeon, rude and dark as they may be; nor, when I lie down, to listen to the changeful moanings of the wind, through its passages; to me it can tell nothing worse than that the night will be dark and cold.' As I spoke, a hollow blast shook the door, and made the light blaze bickering and wide.

"'Will that be all?' said my father, in a voice that struggled to be free. 'Are you sure of this?'—'I will look around me,' said I, for my impulse to speak was strong and elevating, 'even with sport on the fantastic things which darkness and my weak-clouded sight will shape out on the walls of my prison, perhaps my grave.' The images were with me as I spoke, and I wept a few tears, not dejected, but sad and earnest.

"'Fantastic!' he murmured inwardly, 'do you call forms like these fantastic?'—'What forms?' said I, starting in my turn. I looked up. His eyes wandered wildly round the chamber; he extended his arm, and again drew it back; he receded on one foot, almost shrinking within himself, and declining till he pressed on me. 'What is it you watch,' said I, 'with such gesture?' bending forward with strange expectation. 'Have you eyes and do not see it? 'Tis you have done this—you have brought it here. Why will you talk of these things? their mention always does this.' He reached his hand backward to grasp my arm, not for observation but support—pointing with the other, and carrying it slowly round with the visionary motion he beheld. I was chilled with horror. It was the first time I had ever truly beheld a being labouring under the belief of the actual presence of a spiritual nature. My eyes followed his involuntarily, but I could see nothing but the dark hollow extremities of the room, darker from the dimness that came over me at that moment.

"'Beckon not thus,' he continued to murmur; 'this is not the spot—no—you cannot show it—here, in this room, I am safe.'

"Something too ghastly to be called a smile, was spread over his face. 'In the name of all that is holy, whom do you talk to, or what do you point at?'—'Who is near me?' said he. 'Ha! Annibal, why do you grasp my arm thus? What is it you look at so fixedly? There is nothing there, nothing, believe me.'—'I see nothing,' said I; 'but your language has amazed me.'—'Then look another way; you see there is nothing; I stretch out my arm you see, and nothing meets it; but the shadows of these old rooms will often shape themselves into strange array.' He passed his hand once or twice over my forehead. 'Annibal, when my spirits are thus wrought, I will sometimes talk wildly. You must not heed me, or if you do, set it down to the account of the anxiety you have caused me, and let that operate, with other considerations on your compliance. Annibal, disclose to me what you have seen and heard.'

"I was amazed, and even incensed, at a man's thus turning from the fearful punishment of guilt, to secure its concealment by the most abject wiles; I could not conceal my indignation. 'I have seen and heard,' said I, fervently, 'but now, what confirms all my former discoveries.' These strong words roused him at once from his ghastly abstraction. 'Dare you,' said he, sternly, 'dare you persist in this mockery of suspicion and insult? mockery it must be; you impose on your own credulity, you falsify your own convictions, that you may persecute and slander me. You have no proofs. What you have seen in the tower would not be admitted as such by any but a wild and wicked mind, that would sooner accuse a parent mentally of murder than want food for its frantic rage for discoveries.'—'You accuse me unjustly,' said I, amazed at the distinctness of his references; but willing to avail myself of his apparent wish to expostulate; 'what I have discovered was revealed to me by a train of events which I could neither control nor conjecture the issue of. By heaven, I followed the pursuit with shrinking and reluctance, with more than the fears of nature, with a gloominess of presage and conviction that I fear its consequences will verify on my head. The sights I beheld——'

'Sights!' he interrupted. 'There was but one; curse on the folly that tempted me to expose even that one. But who could have thought that cursed prying dotard would lead you to the very spot.' All this was said with such involuntary quickness, I am persuaded he no more imagined I heard him than a man does who accidentally answers his own thoughts aloud; but every word came to me as loud and distinct as if he had been bent to force their meaning on me. I believe he saw horror in my face; for, starting back, he said in a rage,

'Your aspect is horrible to me; you would blast me with your eyes if you could; there is an expression in them worse than those that glared on me just now. What matters it that you and they are silent, when ye can look such things? But you are not as they are; no, you I can lay hold on, and compel to stay and to suffer. And remember, in this contest of persecution you will fare the worst. I have means of infliction beyond all thought, beyond all belief. The spirit that resisted darkness and solitude may be bowed to scorn and debasement. Wretch, you know not half my power. You know not that I am in possession of a secret, the disclosure of which would send you forth a vagabond and a beggar, without name and without portion; scorn hooting at your heels and famine pointing your forward view; that I have no tie to you but a foolish one of habitual compassion; that to-night I might thrust you from my doors to want and infamy.'—'To want you might, but not to infamy. I would to heaven you would avow this secret, and thrust me out as you threaten. Infamy may attach to me while bearing your name, and living in your crested and turreted slaughter-house; but were I suffered to make my own name and establish my own character, I would ask only my honest heart, my strong hands, the sword you have deprived me of, and this precious picture, to animate me with noble thought.' In the enthusiasm of speaking, I drew the picture from my breast, I kissed it, and my hot tears fell on it. He bent over to see it, carelessly I believe; but, heavenly powers, what was the effect! The visage with which, a moment past, he had beheld, or imagined he beheld, the form of the dead, was pleased and calm compared to the expression of mixed and terrible emotion, the horror and wild joy, the eagerness and the despair with which he gazed on it for a moment, and then tried to tear it from me. 'Where! how! by what spell, what witchery, did you obtain possession of this? Give it me. I must have it. 'Tis mine. Wretch, how did you dare? You kept it to blast and distract me. Struggle not with me, I would rend it from a famished wolf.'—'You shall not rend it from me,' said I, holding it tenaciously; 'it has been my companion in freedom and peace, it shall not be torn from me in prison; I care not who sees it, or knows how I obtained it; I copied it from a picture in that tower; the original is in my heart, the chosen and future mistress of it. I have vowed to seek her through the world, and I will keep my vow, if ever I leave this place with life.'—'Miserable boy; miserable, if this be true; you know not what you say.' He smote his hands twice or thrice with a look of distraction, and spoke evidently without fear or restraint: 'My crimes have cursed the world. The poison flows down to the skirts of our clothing. Beings of another generation shall lay their load of sin on my head. Annibal, Annibal, hear my words; you have sunk my soul within me; who but you has seen me thus humbled? I speak not in passion or revenge; such revenge as your ill-fated passion might prepare for me, I shudder to think of. I do not wish to plunge your soul into utter condemnation. Annibal, should you ever see the original of this picture, fly from her, from her abode, her touch, her sight; should her thought ever visit you, banish it as you would the hauntings of an evil spirit, as the tempting whisper of Satan himself; when it besets you, go to some holy man, and let him teach you penance and prayer of virtue to drive it utterly from your——Remember, this is the warning of him who warns you in no weakness of love.' He paused, for he was hoarse with eagerness. 'Annibal, let me look on it, I pray you, let me look on that face, Annibal; 'tis but once more. I see it so often in flames and horrors, I would fain see it in peace, with the smile of life on it.' He spoke this with the dreadful calmness of habitual suffering. I held it to him with a cautious hand. 'Poor Erminia,' he murmured inwardly, and looked at it with that pitied and anguished tenderness with which we look on those whose likeness recalls their sufferings. 'Poor Erminia,' he continued to exclaim and to gaze. In the interval I recovered my breath and my thoughts. 'If,' said I, scarcely hoping an answer, 'the original be no more, what have I to dread from one who but resembles her? The original is dead and in her grave, and I am to fly from her shadow?'—'No, no,' said he, in a low voice, 'she is not in her grave.'

"Again I perceived his eyes fixing with that horrid and nameless vacancy that bespeaks the presence of an object, invisible to the common organs of sight. Again my blood ran cold. 'I adjure you,' said I, rising and holding him firmly, 'I adjure you, be not thus moved again; I cannot bear the sight of it. Your attendants are without; go hence before it overcomes you. I cannot bear it. I am a captive, a lone, fearful being. Your ghastly face will be with me in every corner; it will be in my dreams.' I could not move him. His limbs appeared

stiffened and wound up, and the strong fixedness of his eye nothing could turn away. He appeared to talk with earnest gesture to something that stood between him and the door; but his words were lost in inarticulate murmurs as he attempted to speak. My eyes followed his to the same spot; but though sharpened with fear—almost to agony, they could distinguish nothing. 'Aye,' said he, in that low, peculiar voice, 'I see it well enough! Ye are not of this element! But now ye rose from under my feet, and now ye muster round that door! Not gone yet—nor yet! No, they are larger—darker—wilder!' He paused, but his terrors did not remit, nor could I speak. Then he added, in a deeper tone, with solemn enthusiasm, 'If ye indeed are real forms, that come with power, and for a definite purpose, stand, and I will meet you; will meet you as I may, for this hollow nodding and beckoning cannot be borne! Stand there, and bear up to me visibly, and I will try whether ye are truly as ye seem. I will meet you! Now!—Now!' He seized a light in each hand, and rushed furiously to the door. 'Gone, gone! I will gaze no longer, lest some other shape rise up before me.' As he retreated, he said, 'By heaven, they hear me without—they laugh at my folly! And you laugh too, rebellious wretch! 'Tis you who have brought me to this; your unnatural persecutions have subdued me to this weakness.' He quitted the room, leaving with me a conviction that the plans of guilt are often frustrated by its terrors, and its cowardice is an abundant balance for its malignity. But all the use of this lesson was lost in the fearful recollections that accompanied it. If the purport of his visit was to punish, it was indeed fulfilled. The terrible spectacle of a being writhing under the commission or the consciousness of a crime, oppressed my mind, almost as if I had been an agent in it; every wind that night brought to my ear that low, strange voice in which he talked, as he believed, with beings not of this world; his wild pale face was with me when I shut my eyes—when I opened them, it glided past me in the darkness; when I slept I saw it in my dreams; but "joy came in the morning," such joy as no morning had brought to me since my confinement. Under the conduct of the monk, I was removed from that dreary room, and placed in another, in the same tower I conjectured, but more light and spacious; and, for greater indulgence, to my continued importunities, I received for answer, I should be supplied with books.

"When he departed to fulfil his promise, I felt as if a new sense had been communicated to me—a new light of hope had fallen upon life. There is no telling the freshness and novelty of my joy on the possession of this long-withheld resource, which I wondered I had ever thrown aside in neglect, or in vacancy, or in caprice, which I wondered any one could believe himself unhappy that was permitted to possess; which, above all, I wondered I had never felt the full value of till that moment. During the hour that the monk delayed, I was too happy to glance at the probability of disappointment. I experienced a thousand glad and busy feelings. With the benevolence of joy, I wished I could communicate my frame of mind to the loungers who yawn over untasted libraries, to those whose eyes wander over a book without a consciousness of their contents. To me, my approaching employment seemed inexhaustible; I remembered the time when I repined if I had not several books to make a selection from; but now one appeared sufficient for the occupation of the whole day.

"'I can pause,' said I, 'over every sentence, and though its meaning be nothing new or peculiar to think on, it will waken some corresponding train of thought within me; I shall arrive at some discovery, some new combination or resemblance in objects unnoticed before; at least the pursuit will amuse me. I shall be intently, delightfully employed; and when I turn from my excursion of thought, to see I have yet so many pages to read, yet such a strong aid to interpose between me and the feelings of solitude, and the hour of darkness. Though reading had never been attended with such consequences, still my perceptions were so new that I was confident I should enjoy all this, and more, on the possession of this new treasure, and I determined to husband my store with judicious economy, not to suffer my eye to wander over a single page carelessly; I determined to pause and to reflect, to taste and digest with epicurean slowness. I almost wished my powers of intelligence were slower, that I might be compelled to admit more tardily, and to retain longer. At length it came—the treasure—a single book—it was a library to me; I scarcely waited to thank my grim attendant. I opened the book, and the delusion vanished. So vehement was my literary appetite, and so long had been my famine, that I could no more restrain it than the flow of a torrent. I hurried at once into the middle of my scanty repast, and found myself nearly half through it, before

the execution of my deliberate plan would have permitted me to travel over a page. When all was finished (early in the day), I reflected I had yet to read it over again; and I began again, but soon found that my pleasure was diminished, even beyond the power of repetition to diminish it; the uneasiness of a task was over me; I felt that I must do this to enjoy tranquillity. I could not raise my eyes with the happy vacancy of one who knew he was not helplessly bound to a single resource. I knew what I was doing, I must persist doing, even in default of attention and pleasure, and therefore I did it irksomely. Besides, as darkness was coming on, many passages of a visionary tendency, on which, in the tumult of my first pleasure, and in the broad light of day, I had dwelt with peculiar satisfaction, I did not like venturing on now, and they presented themselves to me on the opening of a page. I scudded over them with a quick, timid eye, as if I feared they would assume some stronger characters while I viewed them.

"On the whole, I even felt my positive pleasure less than I expected; my ideas were too confused and rapid for pleasure. I went on with blind admiration and childish giddiness, swallowing passage after passage, without pause or discrimination. But even to reflect on this afforded me employment, and employment was my object; of this I had abundance, the confusion of my ideas would not permit me to sleep; I turned from side to side; still I was repeating to myself passages I had read, and still I observed that those recurred which had interested me least. In a short time all recollections became weary and tasteless to me from my feverish restlessness, and I heartily wished it all banished. When the castle bell tolled twelve I listened with a momentary relief to the echoes, to the long deep echoes as they died away; the very recesses of my chamber seemed to answer them, and as they rolled off I seemed to feel them spreading above, below, around; I listened to them till my own fancy filled up the pause of sound. Would that it had never left my ears. At that moment a voice in strong, distinct human sounds shrieked murder! murder! murder! thrice, so near, that it seemed to issue from the very wall beside me. I cannot tell you the effect of this cry; whatever disposition I might have felt to assist the sufferer, to shout aloud in a voice of encouragement, to lament my confinement, and to tell them a human being, who heard and pitied them, was so near, was all repelled by a sudden and inexpressible conviction that the sounds I heard were not uttered by man. Whence this arose I could not explain, I could not examine; it would not be resisted, it would not be removed. It chained me up in silence; I could neither communicate nor inquire into it. I could not even speak to my warden about it; I felt all day like a man upon whose peace some secret is preying. I looked in deep oppression around me; on the walls and windows, and dark corners of my room, as if they possessed a consciousness of what they had heard, as if they could pour out and unfold the terrible sounds they had swallowed. In the midst of this dejection I recollected my book; I took it up, and with diligence that deserved a better reward, I read every syllable of it again, and paused over the very expletives with a superstitious minuteness that made me smile when I discovered it. But it would not do. All power of feeling pleasure had ceased. I was like the vulgar, who, when they are affected with any malady, complain that it is lodged in the heart; all the attention I could bestow still left a dull sense of inward uneasiness which I could not remove, and feared even to advert to. But long before night I had finished even my book; still I was resolved not to be "tormented before the time;" I resolved, by every or any act of exclusion, to keep the idea of what I had heard away till midnight, till I could keep it away no longer. Oh, you have never known the sickly strivings of solitude, to dispose my scanty furniture in a thousand shapes, the most distinct from use that can be conceived; to endeavour to walk up and down the room confining my steps to one seam in the flooring; and when they tottered from its narrowness to look behind, lest some strange hand was pushing me from my way, to trace the winding veins in the old wainscot, that amused and pained me with a resemblance to the branches of trees and shrubs, to follow them where they could be seen, and feel them where they could not; these were the wretched resources of a situation that demands variety, yet deprives the spirits of all power as well as means to exercise it; and these wretched resources were a relief in the horrible state of my mind; nor could even that relief be long enjoyed.

"The hour came. For many minutes I remained silent, gasping, as if I was watching for the sound I dreaded. My book was open before me. I did not see a word in it. I felt the slow, yet progressive moment that brings you nearer an object of horror. I felt my hair

rising up. I felt my pores open, and the cold, creeping consciousness of the thing we cannot name, spreading over me. I heard a hissing in my ears. My eyes were involuntarily distended. I felt as if all the dark powers were invisibly, but perceptibly, close to me; just preparing to begin their work; just in the intense silence of preparation. The hand of a little time-piece that had been brought to me moved stilly on. Worlds would I have given for a sound when I saw it just touching on the hour. The castle bell tolled. It was but a moment, for I could have borne it no longer; and the voice again shrieked murder! It was, if possible, more horrible than the preceding night; there was more of human suffering in it; more of the voice of a man who feels the fingers of a murderer on his very throat; who cries with the strength of agony stronger than nature; who pours all his dying force into the sound that is the last living voice he shall utter. Even he who hears such a sound feels not what I did. Man, the actual sight of man, in the most dreadful circumstances in which man can behold or imagine him, is nothing to the bare fear, the suspicion, the doubt, that there is a being near you not of this world. Between us and them there is a great gulf fixed, on the limits of which to glance or to totter is more terrible to nature than all corporeal sufferance. Of this mysterious sensation it is impossible to describe the quality or the degree. Its darkness, its remoteness, its shapelessness, constitute its power and influence. Whether my mind was wearied by its own motions I do not know; but I soon fell into a deep sleep. I know not how I was awakened; but I recollect it was so suddenly and thoroughly, that I started up as I awoke, and became sensible in a moment. The monk was sitting opposite me. He sat at the table on which stood the time-piece and the lamp. His head rested on his hands, and he watched the time-piece in silence. My recollection came to me at once, and fully. I felt that at such an hour such a visitor could have but one purpose. Oh, who can tell the gush of horror that comes to the heart of the being that, lone and helpless, is wakened at midnight, and sees around the hard blank walls of his prison, and beside him the face of his murderer, pale with unnatural thought, by his dim lamp-light.

"I sat up with the impulse, but not the power of resistance. I gazed on him earnestly. He neither raised his head nor spake. I was amazed by his silence. It seemed to cast a spell over me. I had no power to break it. I could not speak to him; yet my eyes remained fixed, and my thoughts seemed rapid in proportion to my inability to utter them. A thousand causes for his silence were suggested to me. He might be waiting the arrival of some assistant, who was to overpower my struggles, or help to thrust my corpse into some dark, remote hole, where no search would ever follow or find me—where the foot of a brother might tread over my dust without a suspicion of my fate. Perhaps he was awaiting a signal to rush on me; perhaps, till some new and horrible means of death should be brought in, and administered to me; perhaps—that was the worst of all—some such means had already been applied in my food, or while I slept; and he was come to watch its operation, to witness the bitterness of death, the twisted eye, the writhing feature, the straining muscle, without giving the aid which all that retain the shape of man alike expect and afford!

"While these thoughts were yet in their height, the hand of the time-piece pointed to one. The monk extended his hand to it—it touched it, and he raised his head. 'Now I may speak,' said he, fixing his large heavy eyes on me. My former suspicions recurred. 'Then,' said I, 'I shall know my fate. Oh! I feel that you are come to announce it; I feel that you are come to murder me!' He waved his hand with a melancholy motion. I had but one construction for all his motions. 'Speak,' said I, 'I conjure you; your eye is dark, and I fear to read it, or look into it. What is your purpose?'—'Death,' said the monk.—'Then I am to be murdered, murdered in this dark hole, without a chance, or struggle, or straw to grasp at for life? Oh! merciful heaven, oh!'—'What is it you fear?' said the monk, rising, 'my business is death, but not yours. What do you fear? Look at this hand; years have passed since it held a weapon; years have passed since blood has flowed in its veins.' I looked at his hand. I involuntarily touched it. It was deadly cold. I was silent, and awaited some explanation of his appearance or his words. 'My business is death, a business long deferred, long unfinished. Under its pressure I have been called up, and kept wandering for many years, without hope, and without rest. I have had many pilgrimages without companion or witness: no one knew me, or sought my name or purpose. But my term is closing, and my task will soon be finished; for now I am permitted to come to you, and speak to you.'

He spoke so slowly that I had time to collect myself. I marvelled at his strange language. 'I know not what it is you mean, nor to what business you allude,' said I. — 'If my senses are not impaired, you are Father Schemoli, the companion of my father.'—'I am,' said he, in a peculiar tone, 'I am your father's constant companion.'—'I knew you well; you look pale and strange by this dim light, yet I know you. But what is the purport of your appearance at this hour, or of the words you have uttered, I know not.'—'And do you only know me as Father Schemoli? Have you seen me under no other appearance? Do you remember the last time you saw me?'—'I remember it well; it was in the west tower; you bore the light; you accompanied my father; I remember you well.'—'Had you never seen me there before?'—'Never, whatever I suspected, I never saw you there before.'—'Beware, beware. What spectacle did you behold there buried and mouldered in one of the passages?'—'I saw a terrible sight there,' said I, shuddering, 'but it was removed on my last unlucky visit to that place.'—'No, you saw it, though in another form; saw it as plain as you see me now.'—'I know not what you mean. Your voice chills me, but I do not understand you.'—'You will not understand me; look on my eyes, my features, my limbs,' said he, rising and spreading himself out; 'the last time you beheld them, they were fleshless, decayed, and thrust in a noisome nook, yet still the strength of their moulding, and shape, and character, might strike an eye that was less quick, and gazed not so long as yours.' As he spoke, was it fancy, or the very witchery of the time and place? his eyes, his mouth, his nostrils, all the hollows of his face became deeper and darker; as the sickly glare of the lamp fell on the skin of his shorn head, it looked tense and yellow like the bones of a skull, and the articulations of the large joints of his unspread hands seemed so distinct and bare as if the flesh had shrunk from them. I swallowed down something that seemed to work up my throat, and I tried to resist the effect of his words and appearance, for it outraged my belief and my senses to a degree that no local terrors, no imposition, or phantasy of fear could justify. 'Is this mockery or frenzy? Is it my ears or eyes you would abuse? If I understand you, you mean something that could not be imposed on the belief of a child, or of superstition itself. You would make me believe that you, whom I have seen going in and out amongst us, is a being who has been dead for years—that you now inhabit another form—that the flesh which I felt a moment past is not substantial. Do you think that durance and hardship have debased me to such weakness? Do you believe my mind cramped and shackled like my body? Or do you believe, even if it were, that my senses are thus enfeebled and destroyed—that I cannot hear, and see, and feel, and judge of the impressions objects ought to make on those senses, as well as if it were not now midnight, and in this dark hold, and by this single dim light? Away! I am not so enfeebled yet.' He heard me calmly.—'You, who wish to judge only by the evidence of your senses, why do you not consult that of your hearing better? Have you never heard this voice before, and where have you heard it?'—'Yes,' said I, with that solemnity of feeling which enforces truth from the speaker, 'yes, I feel I have; but whether my perceptions are confused by fear, or my memory indistinct, I cannot recall when. I hear it like a voice I have heard in a dream, or like those sounds which visit us in darkness and mingle with the wind, yet I feel also it is not the voice with which you speak in the family.'

"I was gazing at him while I spake, as if I could find any resemblance in his face that could assist me to recall the former tones of his voice. He fixed himself opposite to me—he turned his eye full on me.—'What voice,' said he, 'was that which bore witness to Michelo's fears in the west turret, that your father's vengeance was terrible? What voice passed you on the winds of darkness when you watched at the tomb of Orazio? What voice rung in the ears of the dying man, woe and death, when you knelt beside his bed? What voice shrieks murder every night from a depth never measured even by the thought of man since these walls were raised? Is it not the voice which speaks to you now?' His voice had been progressively deepening till its sounds were almost lost; but in the last question it pierced my very sense with its loudness. His form was outspread, and almost floating in the darkness. The light only fell on his hands, that were extended and almost illuminated. All the rest was general and undefined obscurity. I was lost in wonder and fear, such as can only be felt by those who suddenly find their secrets in possession of another; who find all that they had thought important to acquire or to conceal the sport of another, who sports with it and them.

"'Blessed virgin! who are you? where were you concealed? how did you follow me? who

uttered these sounds, or if it was you ——' You cannot admit things that would outrage the credulity of an infant, or of superstition; you cannot believe that I have assumed other forms than that I now bear; you are prepared with your reasons, and your answers, and your arguments, physical and sage, and able to solve all appearances and objects you may witness.' He pursued derisively—' You can tell me, then, what form every night visits the burial-place in the old chapel? Whom did you behold when you ventured into the vault? Whom did you see in the passages of the west tower? Who waved the shadowy arm, and painted the eye of life from the dead wall on you? Who shut, and you could not open, the door of the vault? Who, when I discovered your pretence for breaking into the secrets of the dead was but a weak and unhallowed curiosity—who removed with steps not unseen from that tower to the dark and unblessed lair, from which my cry every night reaches your ears? And if you cannot tell this, what is he who can?'

"When I heard these words, fear, and every other sentiment they might have inspired, were lost in the prospect they opened of satisfying my doubts, my wonder, my long, restless, unsated curiosity. I cannot tell you the effect this enumeration, so distinct, so well-remembered in its parts, produced on me. The predominant feeling of my nature revived and arose within me. Images so remote, so obscure, never recalled without perplexity and doubt, were now with me as if just bursting into light. A hundred inquiries were on my tongue, a hundred wishes were in my heart. I was all restless, glowing expectation. Who, to see my ardent eyes (for I felt them kindle in their sockets) and outspread hands, who could have believed I was addressing such a being—a being formed, in his most favourable aspect, to repel, not to attract; and now arrayed and aggravated in the mist, and dimness, and shapeless terrors of a supernatural agent!

"'Have you indeed this knowledge? Are you indeed the being Michelo's suspicions pointed to, and my own hopes, and fears, and doubts, have so long been seeking? Can you make these rough places I have wandered on so long plain to me? Shall my feet stumble on the dark mountains no longer? Will you tell me all—all I wish to know—all (you can discover) I want to know? If you can do this, I will believe you, I will worship you, and revere you. Take me but out of this house of darkness, and durance, and guilt; give me but to know what it has been the torment and the business of my existence to know; let me learn if I am the dupe of fear and credulity; or, as a better confidence has sometimes whispered, set apart for something great, and high, and remote. Let me know this, and I will bind myself to your service, I will, by all that is sacred; I will bind myself by some tie and means so awful, that even you, with all your awfulness of character and purpose, shall hold it as sacred, and tremble to hear it.'

"In the eagerness of speaking I did not perceive my declining lamp. I was drawn to it by his eye.—' You do not speak,' said I; 'my lamp is going out. Oh! speak before it goes out; for then, perhaps, I shall tremble to hear your voice, and wish you away. Speak, I conjure you. It is a dreadful thing to be left in darkness with such feelings stirred within me: satisfy them before you depart. Are you going, or does the dying light deceive me?'

"I could only see his eyes and his hands, that beckoned with a fitful motion in the flashing light.—' That lamp warns me away. I must go to my other task; I must go to watch at your father's bedside.'—The tone in which he uttered this convinced me he did not speak it in his earthly capacity. The lamp went out. I saw him no more nor heard him more. He disappeared in the darkness, without the closing of a door or the sound of a step.

"Gracious Heaven! what a sensation came over me when I felt myself alone after what I had heard and seen! I shrunk into my cloak. I wished sight, and hearing, and memory, utterly extinct. I felt I had acquired a strange treasure. I felt that the visit and communications I might probably receive were supernatural and marvellous, but I feared to look into my mind. I dreaded to think on them; they were all too wild and darkly-shaped to be the companions of night and solitude. I wished to think deeply of what I had witnessed, but not till morning. I longed for a deep, heavy sleep, to ease my dizzy head, that throbbed, and whirled, and rung, till, grasping it with both hands, I tried to shut every avenue of thought and sensation. It was a dismal night. I heard the clock strike every hour. Morning broke; and when I saw at length the sun, bright and cheerful, shining on my walls, I lay down to rest

with a confidence, a satisfaction of mind, that I believe I never shall again feel going to rest at night.

"Father Schemoli visited me, as usual, in the day. There was not a trace of last night's business in his countenance. I shrunk when he entered, yet, soon surprised at his silence and unaltered look, I spoke to him, spoke of last night, first with questions of general import. These received no answer. I became more anxious; I inquired, I demanded, I entreated in vain. After staying the usual time he departed, without relaxing a muscle, without uttering a sound, or indicating, by look or gesture, that he even understood me. He departed, leaving me in that unpleasant state in which you begin to question the evidence of your own senses, and doubt whether the objects of your solicitude were not the shadows of a dream.

"The day passed on. Evening came, with a train of sad and dusky thoughts. I could not exclude them; I ceased to attempt it. My mind had either sunk under the languor of a long and vain resistance, or had become familiarized to objects once so strange and repulsive to our nature. They seemed to me the proper furniture of my prison. I hung over them in gloomy listlessness, without shrinking, or repelling them as I first endeavoured. Of a mind in this state, no wonder the sleeping thoughts were as dark as the waking. Indeed, all my thoughts, at that gloomy time, floated between vision and consciousness. I have often started from a point where their pursuit has led me, and asked myself, was it the dark object of a dream? That night, weary with the watching of the last, I threw myself on my narrow bed as soon as it was twilight. I had scarce closed my eyes when I was invested with all those strange powers which sleep gives, beyond all powers of life.

"I thought Michelo was still alive, and that he led me to the apartments of the west tower. They were decorated gaily and magnificently, and filled with crowds, who turned their eyes on me, as if something was expected from my arrival. I passed through them till I arrived at the chamber—that chamber whose ominous stains told me of dangers my curiosity or my fortitude defied. It was more magnificent than the rest. At the head of a sumptuous table sat my uncle and his wife, such as I had seen them in their portraits—gay, and young, and splendid. At a distance they appeared to be smiling around them and on each other; but as I drew near them, the smile was altered into a strange expression—it seemed an effort to conceal the sharpest agony. I came still nearer, and fear began to mingle with my feelings. As I approached, my uncle seized my hand and drew me to him; then, withdrawing his gay vest, showed me his breast, pierced with daggers and splashed with blood. I shuddered, but while I was yet gazing on him, he snatched one of the daggers from his side, and plunged it into that of his wife. She fell, dying, beside him; and, with one of those sudden changes that in dreams excite no wonder, he suddenly became Father Schemoli, his head shorn, and his habit that of a monk, and chanted the requiem over the corpse of his wife. It was echoed by a thousand voices. I looked around me; the company, so gay and festive, were changed into a train of monks, with tapers and crosses, and the apartment was a vault. As I gazed still, the lights grew blue and pale; slowly, but perceptibly, the body decayed away, and became a skeleton, wrapped in a bloody shroud. The band of monks faded away, as I looked on them, into a ghastly troop, with the aspects of the dead, but the features and movements of the living; their eyes became hollow, their garments a blue, discoloured skin; the hands that held their tapers as yellow and as thin as they. Still I gazed, while they all around me, and standing on a single point of ground; I beheld them all go down, their forms deadening in the gloom, and the last sound of their requiem coming broken, and faint, and far from beneath. The whole scene was then changed, and I found myself wandering through rooms, spacious, but empty and dreary. From the floor, from the wainscot, from every corner, I heard my name repeated in soft but distinct accents, 'Annibal, Annibal.' It came to me from every side. Pursuing it, but yet scarce knowing the direction, I followed it from room to room. At length I was in one that had an air of peculiar loneliness in it. The voice ceased, and there ran a hissing stillness through the room, as if its object were attained. I looked around me expectingly. On the centre of the room a sumptuous cloak was spread. I approached it, conscious that this was the point and end of my wanderings. I knew not why—I raised, but dropped it again, shrinking, for a bloody corse lay beneath. I was retreating, but the garment began to move and heave, and the figure, extending a hand, seized mine—I could not withdraw it—and drew me under that

blood dropping covering by it. The floor sunk down below us, and I found myself in a passage, low, and long, and dark. The figure glided on before me, beckoning me to follow. Far onward I saw a dim, blue light. I followed the mangled form. We came into a place resembling a chapel. I again saw my uncle standing beside an altar; the tapers on it burned with that strange light I had seen. There was a fearful contrast between the furniture of the chapel, which was gay and bridal, and the figure of the cavalier and that of a lady, who sat near the altar, wrapped in a shroud and cerements. The cavalier approached her; she rose, my uncle advanced, and began to read the marriage service. The cavalier held forward his bloody arm, the lady extended her hand—it was Erminia! I said mentally—'Is this a marriage?' I rushed forward with a wild feeling of jealousy and fear; the lady saw me, she shrieked, she darted from the altar, and catching my hand, led me to my uncle. He gazed at me a moment, then, clasping me in his arms, I beheld him again changed into Father Schemoli. I shrunk from his embrace, twisting myself from him with motions of horror and reluctance.

"I awoke with the struggle, and beheld the monk again seated opposite me, and watching the timepiece by the lamp that was not yet extinguished; with the full wakefulness of horror, I bent forward to see if my hour was yet come—it was past twelve. I felt a satisfaction at it that even the presence of my visitor could not check. He spoke not, as on the former night, and his silence again bound me up. It was a strange and solemn form; we gazed on each other intently; I had no more power to withdraw my eyes from than to speak to him. Whoever had beheld us would have believed me bound by a spell, till his dark eye was turned to me, and his finger extended to dissolve it. The images of my dream were with me still so strongly, that he scarce seemed to make a stronger impression on me by his real than his visionary presence; he ceased to be an agent, but appeared come to be an interpreter. Again, as the hand of the timepiece pointed to one, he raised his eye and said, 'Now I may speak.'—'What is it,' said I, familiarized to his appearance, 'what is it forbids you to speak till this season? You seem to have a strange freedom given you at this hour. I adjure you to speak to me in the day, when our conference will be more natural, and like that of man; but you love to glide on me in darkness and sleep, to look on with strange eyes, to talk to me with the voices of sleep or fancy.'—'That is because in this form my powers are limited; I cannot speak when I would, nor to whom. I am only permitted that at a certain hour, and to but one human being. This heavy vesture I am wrapped in presses on me and checks my movements; but 'tis but the weeds of a pilgrim spirit, and enough has at times glimmered through it to give token of its strange tenant.'—'What is it you speak of; what is it that restrains and presses on you?'—'This form of seeming flesh and blood, that bears about an imprisoned and penanced spirit.' Gracious heaven, how he looked at that moment! so sad, so dim, so visionary. My eye scarcely fixed his form, that seemed to mingle with the darkness that surrounded it. 'Penanced, indeed,' said I, shuddering with partial belief, 'if immured in such a form. But how wild, how monstrous a fiction would your words intimate. Gracious heaven, preserve my reason while I look at you! Save me from credulity, that would deprive me of the very use of my senses, that would make me the victim of a horrid and impossible dream! What might I not be impelled to do if I could believe you? You might make me a murderer were I resigned to your influence. No; this midnight visiting, and the terrors with which you would fill me, are but the beginning of sorrows my unnatural father threatens me with. I see the malice of this persecution. Solitude and confinement, and the privation of all that attends my rank and time of life, have been employed, and failed to subdue my mind; and now he sends you, you, whom nature or habit has indeed made fit for a messenger of horror, he sends you to depress and terrify me; he causes voices to shriek in the passage, and sends a face like the visage of the damned to stare at me when I start from my sleep. Gracious heaven,' said I, rising, and stung with heat and anguish of increasing fear, 'how I am beset! These are not his last resources, he will persecute me to madness. I shall shriek existence away in this den; my eye-strings will burst at some horrible sight; I shall die the death of fear, and die it in solitude. Oh, turn your face away; I see, I feel a smile of mockery and torment through all your silence. I know it, I know you will be here to-morrow night; I shall hear your shrieks rising through the darkness and winds of night. Then you will stand beside me in some altered shape, or perhaps drag me from my sleep.' I

had worked myself to a frame that felt and witnessed all it described. 'Away!' I cried, dashing myself on my bed, and hiding my head eagerly in my cloak. 'Away! I will shut mine eyes and not look upon you.'—'If this was intended,' said he calmly, 'why did I not do it before, when the impression would have been more forcible from its being unlooked for? And why do I throw a veil over the visioned form of my nature, and confer with you as man with man? If my purpose were to terrify you, would I have acted thus?'—'I know not; 'tis your office and habit to deal in mystery, to torment with perplexity; if it be not, why will you not explicitly declare your purpose and be gone? This chamber is dark enough without your presence. Yet, do not,' starting up and grasping his hand, 'do not to-night; to-morrow, speak to me to-morrow at noon, and I will listen to you.'—'To-morrow at noon I cannot, I shall be laid in my dark and bloody lair; I cannot walk in the light of noon, nor utter a voice that may be heard by man.'—'Your outward form,' said I, 'will be here.'—'It will be but my outward form,' said he.—'But why this necessity for night and solitude? Are you an owl, or a raven, that must haunt in ruins and hoot by moonlight only?'—'I have a darker tale to tell than the owl that sits on the desolate ruin, than the raven that beats heavily at the window of the dying.'—'Then forbear to tell it, for I will not hear it, and leave me; the terrors of solitude and my own thoughts are enough.'—'You did not think so when you forced old Michelo to the west tower, to watch with you at the tomb, when you pursued me from haunt to haunt, and almost saw me at the task which may not be seen.'—'I was not then,' said I, 'confined in this prison, and therefore I was not permitted to speak to you. Strange being, who can at once lead on and repel, who can so qualify fear with curiosity, who just know when to strengthen, while you seem to remit all influence, I feel I can resist no longer. You are possessed of every avenue to the human mind; you can make me fear, and desire, and retreat, and pause, and advance, as you will; even when I think I dread you most you can make an appeal to some secret and cherished object of desire, that distracts me with curiosity, that subdues me to concession and entreaty. I feel my heart, and mind, and fate are at your disposal or your sport. You have been with me in solitude; you have seen me when no eye saw me; you have overheard my thoughts when they were not uttered. Go on, tell me what you will; tell me what I am to do or to know; go on—I fear, I feel I must believe it all.'

"'"'Tis twenty years since I was what you are now, a mortal, with mortal passions and habits. 'Tis twenty years since my blood flowed, or my pulses beat with life; when they did, their current was keen and fiery; I lived the life of sin and folly. Heaven and holy things were far from my thoughts. The power whom I forsook, forsook me; I was given over to a reprobate mind. My life was passed in a blaze of wickedness, and cut off with an end of blood. I was dragged to the grave by murderous and unhallowed hands—hands like my own, on fire with wickedness, and drunk with blood—hands that I am appointed to see every night held up for pardon, and to tell they are held up in vain. My body was thrust into the hole where you found it, and my soul——'—'Where did it go? I adjure you, stop not there; tell me, where did your soul depart to?'—'I must not tell, nor could you hear the secrets of the world of shadows; my taskers, who are ever around me, would flash upon your sight, and sweep me away before you, if I told their employment. The bare sight of them would shrivel you to dust, and heap this massy tower in fragments over your head; you must not cross me with these questions, nor interrupt me while I speak; my time is short, and my words measured to me; but of this be assured, no visions of moonstruck fancy, no paintings of the dying murderer, no imaginings of religious horror, have touched upon the confines of the world of woe. After a term of years, (during which it was a remission of sufferance to ride the night-mares through the dark and sickly air; to hide me in the foldings of the sick man's curtains, and slowly rise on his eye, when his attendants withdrew, till he shrieked to them to return; to wail and beckon from flood, and fell, and cavern, till the wildered passenger, or wandering child of despair, plunged after me, and with dying eye saw who had waved them on to do the loathed service of the foulest of fiendish natures, the incubus, and the vampire, and the goule; to bring them from the various elements which have swallowed them; their unutterable food, our own corrupted remains; to see the very worms conscious, and dropping from the prey; to feel the pain of our own flesh devoured with mortal sensation not all extinguished, like the faint feelings of pain in sleep, just vexing our dreams, and warring on the outworks of sensation), after a

term of years thus passed, one night, when the evil ones were lording it in the upper air, driven on by the flaky forks of the lightning, the sharpbolted shot of the hail, and the hollo, and shout, and laughter of the revelling host of darkness, I shrunk into the recess of a mountain, and called upon its riven and rocky bowels to close upon me; but I was driven still onward; the sides of the mountain groaned under the fire-shod and hooky feet of my pursuers. I pressed on through the dark passages, through secrets of nature never seen by sun, clogged by the dews, parched with the airs, seared with the meteor fires of this dungeon of the fabric of the world; till through an aperture that would admit all their armies, I flew into a vast plain, in the centre of the mountain, where piles of smouldering and charmed rock, inscribed with forbidden names, repelled the escape even of a disembodied spirit. I believed this to be my final bourne, and almost thought with hope, that the last thunders would dash even this adamantine prison to dust; but I was deceived, yea, though a spirit unblessed, I was deceived by hope. This had been a vast plain, whereon, in elder time, stood a vast city, with all its inhabitants; they were idolatrous and wicked, and invoked the powers, and studied the arts, of the dark and nether world.

"'Therefore, the supreme power had in his wrath caused a vast body of volcanic fire to rise out of the centre of the city, which had consumed it, with all its inhabitants, in one night, while the stones, and mineral masses, and solid fire spreading around and arching over it, formed a mountain around it, and hid its name, and place, and memory from man for ever and ever. It was now the favoured haunt of unclean spirits; none others could find their way to it, and live. There I saw forms that must not be named, nor how employed; I shrunk into a recess from the abhorred lights; but there I found that my flight had been involuntary, that nothing was less meant than a respite from pain, and that even the sport of devils must have malignity. In that recess a volume of fire, fed with other substance than earthly fire, sent up its long, flaky spires of green, and purple, and white; around it, impressed on the rock, and flashing out in its shifting light, were the forms of men in solid sulphur, or molten mineral, or those fused and mingled bodies, the monstrous birth of volcanic throes; they were a company of sorcerers, that were met to do their dark rites on the very night that they were caught, and blasted by fires from the nether world. They remained fixed around a magic fire they had raised, each in the very form and attitude in which punishment overtook them, melted into the walls of the vast temple of magic, where they were assembled, and which was now a cavern in that inward region; each still bore the frown and the awe of the potent hour in their smouldering faces; each still was armed with sigil, and teraph, and talisman. In the heart of the fire lay a human body, unconsumed for two thousand years; for they had but partially raised it for some magic purpose, when they were destroyed; and till the spell was reversed, the body must continue there for ever. But they were now compelled by a stronger power than their own, by the power of my companions, to waken from that sleep of horrid existence, to renew the unfinished spell, and to raise the corse that lay in the flames. They obeyed, for they could not resist the words of power; and they felt that their crime was become their punishment. It was a sight of horror, even for an unblessed soul to see them. Rent from the smoking rocks, that they wished might fall on them, and hide them; their forms of metallic and rocky cinder, where the human feature horribly struggled through burnt and blackening masses, discoloured with the calcined and dingy hues of fire, purple, and red, and green; their stony eyes rolling with strange life; their sealed jaws rent open by sounds, that were like the rush of subterrene winds, moving around the fire, whose conscious flakes pointed and wound towards them. The spell was finished—the corse was released, and the living dead re-enclosed in their shrouds of adamant. Then words were uttered, and characters wrought, which no man could bear and live; and I, for further penance, was compelled to enter the body to which the functions of life were restored; and to which I must be confined, till my term of sufferance was abridged by the interment of my bones, and the punishment of my mortal murderer.'—'Stop, stop,' said I, vehemently, 'I can listen no more. My head is reeling; my eyes are flashing while you continue to speak while I look on you, my breath is lost. Can man believe these things?' I repeated to myself, 'can man believe these things?—But, oh,' again I said internally, 'can man invent these things?—'Yes,' it continued, 'these are massive bones of the elder time; this tawny skin was darkened by a sun two thousand years younger than that which lit you yesterday. It was the body of an inhabitant of that ancient city that was raised to be employed

in the dark doings of witchery, on the very night of its destruction. Oh, think what it is to be again pent in sinful flesh, without the power or desires of life; to look on the world through the dim organs of death; to see men as shadows moving around me, and to be a shadow amongst them; to feel all the objects and agents of life striking on my quenched perceptions, as faintly as the images of sleep; but to be terribly awake to all that imagery, those motions that are hid from man—when I sit among you, to see the forms, and hear the voices I do; to converse with the dead, and yet wander among the living! How can I lose this dread sense of another state of existence? It can be acquired by no living being, but can never be lost by the dead—if any dead are tasked like me. I cannot tell you what words are whispered to me, nor what shapes are beside me now.'

"Alternate bursts of enthusiam and fear were visiting my mind, like the alternate rush and ebb of an ocean-wave, as he spoke. I had uttered my last words under the influence of fear, and now I spoke alike involuntarily under the other impulse. 'You can, you must let me behold those forms; I must hear those sounds. Are the secrets of another world so near me, and cannot I lay hold on them?'—'You cannot; these things man may not behold, and live.'—'I would hazard life itself,' said I, with frantic eagerness, 'to look on them.'—'Mortal, perverse and fond, you would throw away life to feed an unhallowed curiosity; and you listen without emotion to a spirit in despair that cries to you for remission and rest from the pit where there is no water.'—'Me!—to me this appeal! Who cries to me? What must I do, or how am I involved? Oh! do not call on, do not come to me. I fear the snares of death are gathering about me while I confer with you. Be satisfied; you have filled me with horrors; you have kindled in my mind a fire that can never be quenched. Be satisfied, and depart. This is a wild hour, full of dark thoughts and hauntings from the power of evil. Leave me. I have heard too much; I have thought too much.'—'No, I cannot leave you; I must not leave you. Every night my visit must be repeated; every night my tale must be told perhaps by other voices than mine. Long was the name of my deliverer withheld. I was driven around the world for years, the sport of the elements, the outcast of man, unknown by and unknowing all, yet compelled every night to visit the place where my bones decay unblest; and measure every night, with groans that would thrill a spirit to hear, the ground to the chapel with my strange load, rend up the earth with my own hands, and place it in an unhallowed grave, while the fiends who watch the lost souls in those vaults, with howl and charmed tapers, mocking the absent rite, would cast it forth again, and bear it with laugh and ban to that blood-sprinkled hole where it cannot rest. It was a weary way for me to wander every night to that spot, though the sun had set on me in the deserts of Africa. At length I was permitted to enter this castle, in a character that procured me exemption from the persecution of frequent notice, and of being compelled to mingle much with human beings; yet, secluded as I was, the domestics noticed, feared, and watched me, and were punished for their curiosity. Here I learned who was to free me from my dark thrall. Annibal di Montorio, it is you. You must collect my unburied bones; you must lay them in holy earth, with needful and decent rite, with bell and blessing of holy men. Annibal di Montorio, your task does not end here. From the groaning ground, from the ground where my murder was done, there comes a voice, whose cry is "blood for blood."'

"'Stop, stop, before I run wild; I must not hear these words, and deserve to live; I know their terrible meaning; I know whom they point to; but it is impossible, it is unnatural, it is perdition; I must not listen to you, I dare not; you are indeed,' (my thoughts sinking into solemnity), 'you are indeed what you say you are, an evil spirit. Such things as you have told me, man could not conceive, man could not relate. I believe it all, and I believe you are a tempting spirit, a spirit of lies—full of horrible suggestions. Oh, Maria, my brains wheel round; but to think on what you have darkly led me to! Away from me—avaunt thou adversary! Whatever you are, you savour strongly of the power that prompts you. A moment, and I shall see you fly shrieking and defeated, surrounded by hooting imps, goaded with talon and fang. Oh, look not at me thus! I pity you, by heaven and all its saints, I pity and will pray for you! All offices of grace and love, mass and prayer, and pilgrimage, shall be done for you; your bones shall lay in holy earth, with cross and relic, and holy water, and ceremonies to drive away the power that has you in dark durance; all things that may do peace to a parted soul shall be done for you; but further, name it not, hint it not; I will

not hear you speak again. Do not look at me with that dark meaning eye; I know who he is; I know all—but some other hand——Who made me an angel of vengeance, to ride air in the terror of my purpose through the bowels of nature, through the shriek of mankind, through the blood of a father?'

"Ippolito, if, from these broken sentences of fear and aversion, you cannot discover the meaning I ascribed to the words of the phantom, I dare not tell it more explicitly. He understood me well. 'You perceive my purpose, then; with the purposes of destiny, it is the same thing to be discovered and obeyed. But you are full of the flesh and fleshly fears. You have not yet attained that sad and lonely exemption from mortal feeling which is marked on the brow of the agent of fate. You have not stood in the thick cloud of your purpose, from which the lightnings and thunderings issuing, terrify the congregation of mankind. But we shall meet again.'—'Never—oh, never! By every holy name, if holy name have power over you, I entreat you to depart: haunt me no more; you can drive me to despair, but never to guilt. Begone, I adjure you and command you; we must meet no more. I know not to what the terrors of your presence might drive; madness or worse than madness threatens me while I look at you. Your words have sunk into my soul; nothing shall ever remove them; your appearance and your tale can never be forgotten; there is no need to repeat them. If you value the welfare and salvation of an immortal soul, leave me, and never see me more.'

"He shook his head mournfully. The motion continued so long, and was accompanied with a look so disconsolate, that twice and thrice I rubbed my eyes, and doubted that their weakness gave a vibrating motion to what I saw. At length he spoke. 'My visits are involuntary. I was constrained to wander over the earth till I found the being destined by fate to give rest and atonement to my corse and spirit; and now that I have found you, your own shadow, your own limbs, your own consciousness, and heart, and soul, cannot be more intimate and ever-present companions to you than I and my terrible tale shall be. I will visit you every night; I will hover round you all day; my whispers shall never leave your ears, nor my presence your fancy. Fly from me; plunge into other scenes and employments; change your country, your character, your habits; I will follow you through all space; I will live with you through all life; the eternal will has wedded me to you. Suspend the swelling of the sea, arrest the moon in her course, change all things beneath the throne of heaven, and then despair of driving me from you. The powers of both worlds are alike armed against your impious opposition. Hell will not remit its torments, nor Heaven reverse its decrees. I may haunt you in more terrible shape; I may speak to you in a voice that resembles the seething tides of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; your reason may desert you in the struggle, but I must pursue you till my body and soul are at peace. Then, when the great blow is struck' (his eye rolled, and his figure spread), 'and the thunder, the long-withheld thunder of heaven, is smiting into dust these dark and bloodsteeped-towers; then, once, and for the last time, you shall see, in my original form, bestriding these blasted battlements, a giant-shape of fire, rending up the vaults where murder has slept for ages, and pouring out to-day the guilty secrets of a house whose records of crimes and of disasters shall end in me.'

"I attempted to interrupt him, or to forbear to listen to him in vain; I might as well have interrupted the ravings of the sybil, or arrested the storm of heaven. He rushed on the ear and soul with a flood of sound and thought that left the hearer gasping, bewildered, staring around to see had the voice issued from above, from beneath; were the walls around him in motion, or was the ground beneath him heaving and yawning with those terrible sounds. Till he had ceased, so suspended was my mind, I did not perceive I was in darkness. This circumstance, which I had determined to watch tenaciously, again escaped me in the confusion of my thoughts. I held up the glimmerings of my lamp; they showed me his figure dimly retiring, but in what direction I could not discover in the wide blackness of my vault. Quitting my lamp, and extending both arms, I felt around me, calling on him, till the echoes of my voice, so fancifully aggravated, and modified to a thousand wild tones, in those long passages, came fearfully back to my ear, and, with a sudden impulse, I drew in my arms, lest I should encounter his, or some other strange touch, freezing up my limbs with its chilling gripe.

"When I retreated to my bed I expected a terrible night; but I found that the energy of my feelings was a balance for their wild agitation. I was too much out of the sphere of human nature to be assailed by its fears. To every start and stirring of uneasy thought I

felt myself replying with a power of resistance and careless defiance I had never felt before, and that now I wondered I felt. I slept heavily for the remainder of the night, undisturbed by dream or start of fear.

"The next day, when I awoke, I looked around me with a new sensation. I spread out my hands, and said to myself, almost audibly, I am a new creature. I rose, and strode across my room with the proud step of one who was elevated above the feelings and claims of nature. I felt that I had held communion with the inmate of another world; of that world so awful to our fears, so remote from our conceptions. I felt a shadowy dignity spreading around me. A feeling of pride, without the grovelling and precarious qualities of earthly pride, bore me up; I felt myself superior to kings and all the mighty ones of the earth. 'What is their power?' said I, internally; 'it lasts for a few hours, and worms, like themselves, tremble beneath it. To secure it they consult with man; they arm men, tremble for its preservation, and are annihilated by its loss. But the power with which I am invested extends to a future and unending state. Dependent on me is the state of beings whose substance is indissoluble, and whose duration is eternal. To solicit my aid the laws of heaven are changed, and the veil of the temple of eternity rent in twain. I can fix in passiveness, or bind down in torment, beings who could, if they were let loose, scatter and ravish the system and elements in which I live; and I can do this by powers beyond the most magnified powers of my nature; powers peculiarly and exclusively intrusted to me, and for a period beyond that of my own life, perhaps beyond that of mankind.'

"The ghastly character of these new powers was lost in these contemplations, or rather, in that strong flow of renewed spirits with which every creature enters on another day, occupied by a peculiar train of thought, and illuminated by a bright and morning sun. When I did look around, the few external objects the circuit of my prison furnished, all became, to my grasping and expanded frame of feeling, converted into fuel for them. Their impressions diversified my thoughts without diminishing them. I looked on the sun, or rather, on the reflections that, chequered with the heavy casement-work, fell on the thick arches of my windows; I looked on him as if I could have controlled and turned his beams backward. I thought with contempt of his task, employed in lighting myriads of half-animated creatures to quit animal sleep for mental lethargy, a night of drowsiness for a day of vacancy; in calling up beings exactly the same since he first dawned on earth, through exactly the same tasks, and to exactly the same repose.

"And I thought of myself, set apart by the hand of heaven to work a secret and sublime purpose; to ope the hidden book of crimes, and read them to an appalled world; to gripe, like Sampson, the main props of the fabric of iniquity, and bear it to the ground, crushed under its huge and scattering ruin. I thought that to the record of my life the heart of man would cling, by its most vital hopes and fears, by its fond interest in life, and its trembling solicitude of futurity; while the histories of nations, and kingdoms, and chiefs, the ephemeral bubbles of time, mouldered away in their hands. I looked on the walls of my prison with a contempt, a secret, invidious contempt. 'Yes,' said I, 'ye may frown and lower, ye may deepen your shadows, and make your fastenings tenfold more strong; every wind of heaven may blow on you, till your cement hardens into solid rock and your pile is a pile of adamant. But, before the arm of Him who beckons me to his strong bidding, ye, and all earthly obstructions, shall pass away like smoke. Ye may look grim on other prisoners; children of earth may languish out their unmarked and valueless lives here; they may look up, shuddering, to your iron roof, and say, "From hence is no redemption;" but what are ye to me, whom the Power that leads can bring from the bottom of the ocean, can snatch from the crater of the volcano, can bid the elements fall back; yea, can make the very grave give up again, "because he hath need of me?"'

"I paused over these reflections. My mind was filled with a terrible courage, a daring elevation, a wild and gloomy sublimity. The sensation of fear was the ground of all my feelings; but it was fear purified from all grossness of earthly mixture or infirmity. I was the associate, not the prey, of unearthly beings. I was no longer grasping at a shred of the falling mantle of the prophet, but sailing up in his fiery chariot, careering through the extent of space, and bending the forms of the elements to my progress and my power. For hours I walked up and down my prison, which was spacious and lofty, but whose limits seemed to

drive back my breath—my velocity increasing, my frame mantling and throbbing, my mind soaring at every step, till the hour of my attendant's appearing was long elapsed.

"This scarcely produced an impression on me. At length I heard a step approach, and a key inserted in the door. My senses had been so quickened by the habit of intense observation on the trivial circumstances that exercised them, that I perceived at once, from the slow and irregular manner in which the key was turned, that it was not held by the usual hand. I had scarce time to notice this, when it burst open with an impetuous movement, as if my gaoler was incensed at the delay, and Filippo, half sobbing, half shouting, was at my feet. I never experienced, never will again experience, perhaps, so strong a proof of the mutability of human feelings. In a moment all within and around me was changed. I was rejoiced to compound between the dark and cloudy elevation of my mind, and the warm, humble, sheltered feelings that the sight of a human creature, my fellow in the flesh, its infirmities and affections, and who appeared to have some kindness towards me, excited. I rejoiced to descend from the precipice of aerial existence, and claim kindred with man. For some time I permitted his emotions to flow on unrestrained. I was soothed and delighted by feeling his warm tears and kisses raining on my hands, my vesture, my knees, with rapid and impatient delight. I was only moved to disturb him by the consideration that we were, perhaps, observed, and that the unequivocal marks of his regard might expose him to danger. I endeavoured to raise him. He understood and answered my fears. There was no one near us, he said, no one dreamed of watching or suspecting us; all was entrusted to him, thanks to the saints, and, above all, his patron Filippo, that enabled him to deceive my father, and even that fiend-monk, as he called the confessor, with vehement bitterness.

"I could not suppress my astonishment at his appearance and his information. I had believed myself shut out from all the world, from the approach or sympathy of man; least of all did I believe that one exposed to the persecution which had immured me, should be permitted to visit me in freedom. But it was in vain to pour question on question: Filippo's eagerness and delight overbore and actually silenced me for the first half hour, and scarcely even then could I obtain a coherent account of the means that had again brought us together.

"'Oh, signor!' said he, 'do you remember that last terrible night, when you paused at the foot of the stairs and threw open that dark door? and you entered it so pale, I thought I had beheld you going into your tomb; but I had scarce time to think of anything, when I was thrust back as I attempted to follow them, and the key turned on me in the passage. I knew not what they intended. I feared all things that were terrible. But there was a heaviness over me; whether it was the consequence of the sudden amaze that had seized us, or the watching, or the strange doings of the night, I know not, but I sat down on the ground and wrapped my head in my mantle, and continued still but not insensible; it was a strange mood, signor, now that I recall it. I felt no fear, I uttered no complaint; yet I believed I had not long to live. I listened stupidly to steps approaching, though I thought they were the steps of some one appointed to dispatch me. But when I heard them coming yet nearer, and felt that I must raise my head and look on what was so near me, I uttered a loud cry, though without any distinct notion of pain or danger. It was the monk. He raised me roughly by the arm, and bade me follow him. Queen of heaven! through what places did he lead me. What a prize to the Inquisition or to a banditti would this castle be, with its passages, and vaults, and chambers in the solid wall, without window or loophole, or a single avenue of human comfort, and air that our lamp could scarce burn in—air like the breathings of a vault. I felt I should die—die a certain and miserable death, if I were left there, even without violence or hardship; but I tried in vain to obtain from the monk the slightest hint of what he intended to do with me. Often I thought that I was as strong as he, that there was no one near to assist either of us, that if I even extinguished the light and trusted to the windings of those vaults for concealment or escape, it would be better than to go on like an ox to the slaughter. These thoughts often came to me, and often I half raised my eye to the dark face beside me, to see was it assailable, was it like the face of man that is liable to weakness or danger. But oh, signor, I drew it away again without hope. There is nothing like man about him. I fear no man; I could cling to life and grapple for it as keenly, if I knew my weapons and my compeer, as any man in Italy; but when I am near that monk, I feel—oh, I know not how. The air that comes from him is chill; his large dead eye fixes me, the

tones of his voice come over me like the roll of distant thunder at night, when we half fear to listen, and half to shut it out. Is he not a strange being, signor?' said he, turning suddenly, and fixing his dark eyes, distended with fear, on me.

"'He is, indeed,' said I, involuntarily; 'but,' after a pause, 'proceed, Filippo.'

"'Do you believe him to be indeed a man like ourselves?' he continued, with increasing eagerness, and visage still lengthening. 'I know not; I cannot tell; I beseech thee to speak no more of him; go on with thy own narrative, but mention him as little as possible in the course of it.'—'Well, signor, I passed four days in darkness and solitude; but how shall I proceed if I am not permitted to mention the monk? He was the only person I thought of, the only person I saw, except you. Oh, signor, think what it is to pass four days in total solitude, in total darkness, except when he visited me with my scanty portion of food; and then, by the dim light he carried, I could partly see the vast and shapeless darkness of my vault. 'Twas strange, signor, but I saw it better in his absence. When the light was brought into my prison a mist seemed to hang over every object; a kind of tremulous, blue dampness spread all beyond the edges of that pale lamp; but no sooner was it removed than all the dark nooks and corners which I had never seen, came strong and clear before my eyes. It was in vain that I wrapped my head tight and tighter in my cloak; in vain I said to myself, I am in the dark; these things are not before me; I am in a close sheltered corner where nothing is approaching me, and from which nothing is moving me; yet still—still would I seem to myself wandering on, thrusting myself down some steep, dark descent, rooting in some gloomy nook, following some strange light that glimmered and flitted before me, till, all on a sudden, some haggard face edging the dark corner, would grin and chatter at me. Then I would feel myself shrinking back to my straw, and still it would pursue me, and still it would seem to rustle through my cloak, and peep at me in every fold; for still I seemed to see, though my eyes were closed, and though I was in utter darkness.'

"Melancholy as this account was, I yet was delighted with human communication, and with an opportunity of comparing feelings different from my own in a similar situation.

"'Ah, signor, said Filippo, earnestly, 'how happy are gentlemen of learning, learned signors, that can search into their own minds, and recall their reading, and frame conversations, and have all they ever knew or loved with them in their captivity and loneliness by force of mind. I thought I never should feel that deep and heavy solitude if I could recollect something to think of, something that would take me out of that dark place, and set me among things and people that I once was happy with. Heaven help me! I knew nothing to drive that lonely feeling from my heart. All I could do, I did. I repeated all the prayers my uncle Michelo had taught me whenever my food was brought; for I had no other means of knowing the hour, and I tried to recollect, as well as I could, some verses of Ariosto, which I had heard a recitator at Naples pronounce. I found my memory marvellously improved by darkness and solitude; many lines I had long forgotten came fresh to my mind; I repeated them over and over again; nay, I even added some to them, very unlike the original indeed; but what would not a solitary prisoner resort to, and find interesting? Still there was a loneliness and emptiness within me, a want of employment and of thought. I envied even the grim and silent being that came with my food. He had doors to lock, and passages to pass, and something to be employed in. And oh, how I envied such as you, signor, who have a power of filling up all solitude, of reading over your books, and conversing with your friends, though both are far from you!'

"When Filippo said this I blushed involuntarily. I recollected how little of this praise of felicity belonged to me; and I felt how much it is in the power of circumstances to reduce minds to the same level, to strip us of the trappings of locality, and show what a kindred vein of suffering and weakness runs through the breast of us all, if the removal of outward distinctions permits us to detect and to trace its affinities.

"'But proceed, Filippo; the period of your total solitude was only four nights you told me.'—'Yes, signor, it was on the fourth evening that the confessor, after bringing my food, and waiting till I had finished it, told me to follow him, and prepare to quit the vault. He has so absolute a manner with him, that all power of inquiry or resistance dies within me when he speaks. I followed him without a word, and knew not, as he led me on, whether it was to death or life. I began, however, to mistrust that it was the former, when I perceived that he

was conducting me to your father's apartment. It was evening; but the tapers were already lit, for your father hates the darkness. When I entered the room he was standing. There was another figure there which I saw but dimly; for my eyes were weak, and my limbs reeled under me. Your father looked at me with astonishment. 'Is this Filippo?' said he, turning to the monk; 'this spectre—this shadow—is it Filippo?' I was subdued to a childish weakness by my confinement. His voice sounded compassionately. What voice would not be delightful after a silence of four days? I attempted to supplicate; I believed him touched by the spectacle he had made me; but my voice failed me, and I stood trembling and silent before him. 'Filippo,' said he, 'you see the consequences of disobedience; you feel that I have a power to punish, which it is vain for you to provoke or oppose. I know you to be not incapable of reflection, not of a vulgar mind, and therefore I deign to reason with you. If romantic boys and inquisitive menials are permitted to rove about discovering or inventing wonders, what family can repose in honour, what individual can rest in peace? I am not admitting that you can discover anything that would tend but to your own confusion; but even the misfortunes of an illustrious family, if extensively known, involve a species of disgrace from the prejudices of society; at least they are unfit for a domestic's tongue to sport with, and to scatter around.'

"All he said appeared candid and condescending; the voice of gentleness, of human feeling, was rare and delightful to me; I felt it convey shame and conviction to me; I inwardly condemned myself for curiosity and disobedience; I attempted to falter out an excuse; he interrupted me. 'It is enough,' said he, 'I meant not to crush you, but to correct you. You have suffered enough: but as long as the influence of your young master might expose you to repeated danger, I should be to blame for your second offence, if I expose you to it. Go hence, therefore, and if gratitude can bind you, you are bound to me. Marco here will conduct you to the house where my Apulian steward will call in a few days, to bring you with him to my estates there; he has my directions to settle you there in a situation little inferior to his own, where you may learn habits of regularity and obedience. Do not oppress me with your thanks—I—I do not wish to hear them.' I attempted to utter some incoherent sounds of gratitude; but he repelled me with impatience that confounded me. 'I will have no more of this—I cannot bear it. Will you not take him from me, father?' I forbore to speak. 'Set out immediately,' said he, 'night is the best time: to-morrow will bring you to your journey's end; and Marco will be your guide.' He retired, attended by his confessor.—'Come, fellow-traveller,' said Marco, advancing, 'shall we set out? night is gathering fast.'

"I now saw him distinctly for the first time; he was a strange, ferocious-looking fellow; I marvelled to see such a one in the count's apartment, among whose virtues condescension was never very distinguished; but everything around me was marvellous, and the sight of Marco, as he was called, was forgotten in the condescension of the count, and the suddenness of my own deliverance. I said I was ready to attend him; but he saw me totter, and look weak; he approached the table, where stood a flagon of wine, 'Come,' said he, 'this glass to your safe and speedy journey; swallow it, man, you will have need of courage.' I took the wine from him, and looked on him as I took it with the vacant eye of weakness; but the look of his features roused me, weak as I was; it was a strange expression; I do not like to think of it even now. We went out immediately; he took care I should not be seen by any of the family. We went to the stables. I felt myself inflamed by the wine I had swallowed, and we rode off together in high spirits. In a short time, however, my companion became silent and gloomy. I asked him a thousand questions about my journey, its object, and its termination; I could get no answer from him, but a short and general one—'Your journey is short and easy; to-morrow night will end it.' Then I spoke of the count, and his condescension to me; but I observed, that as I spake on this subject, he became more dark and more restless: then I began to inquire how long he had been in the service of the Count Montorio. 'I have served the count,' said he, 'many years.'—'Yet I do not recollect seeing you before to-night," said I.—'It is very probable; I am not always visible to the family, though few, I believe, can boast of being more constantly employed, or of having rendered more useful service to his excellenza.'—'Secret ones, it should seem,' said I, half jestingly.—'Very likely, but not the less useful,' said he, sternly.

"We went on in silence, and lay that night at a shed, in a vineyard in the Campagna: these sheds, you know, in which the watches guard the grapes during the vintage, are com-

structed of straw, and branches, and other slight materials—this was our lodging; I did not soon go to rest, for my mind was tossed by the circumstances that had preceded the journey; and soon after my companion lay down, I found all thought of rest was vain. He talked to himself with such loudness and vehemence, you would have believed that armed men were fighting in the hut, and blood was spilt, and bodies were falling like withered leaves. Sometimes he would cry out to wipe those daggers; sometimes to hide those bloody garments; sometimes, 'What struggling still! press your knee firmly on his breast, and gripe the skin of his throat! Ay, that will do; now close his eyes, and wipe that bloody foam off his mouth.' Then starting up, he would cry, 'There, fellows, there, he has fled, he has escaped; fly after him, pursue him; my lord the count will buy his blood with half his lands.'

"These were strange words; but I confess that while I looked at the bright and blessed moon, and caught the breeze through my casement of leaves, so fresh and cool after the damp heats of my dungeon. I listened to them rather with vacant curiosity than fear. As I looked on the clear heavens, I thought I saw the very star, that when I used to be returning through the woods to the castle, I would see just rising over the battlements of the west tower. It would glimmer among them, signor, just like a feeble taper at a casement; and when I saw it rising over the dark hills of the vintage, I thought of the castle, and of you. Though my companion and my journey were so strange, myriads would I have given you were along with me, and I determined, as soon as I had reached Apulia, to discover where you were, and to liberate you if possible.'

"'Filippo, I believe this is a gratuitous addition to your narrative. In the sudden joy of liberation, could you think of me?'—'Could I, signor? Ah, you know not with what keenness the mind, just escaped from suffering, reverts to images that awaken and contrast its former state. To think of myself was to think of you; for to think of myself was to think of a lonely being, a solitary being, a confined and pining being; therefore I thought of you. All I had so lately felt for myself was transferred to you; it was not sympathy, signor, but strong remembrance—remembrance of the dungeon and the darkness, the dim lamp, the meal that I scarcely saw, the strange faces staring me out of sleep, and the toads that I shook off as I awoke. All this I thought of, and how then could I forbear to think on you?

"Early in the morning we set forward again; we rode through a wild, woody country all day, only waiting to sleep in the hollow of a chesnut during the heats of noon. At the close of evening we were in a thick wood, the tracks were perplexed, and appeared as if they were not much frequented. Marco often paused and looked around him with uneasiness and distrust; he often checked his mule, and looked between the trees, and listened often, as the wind that now began to rise moaned among the branches, sometimes resembling the sound of a human voice. It was to no purpose to ask questions; his utter silence, and the gloom of the evening, were beginning to make me feel strangely, when, on a sudden, after muttering to himself for some time, he spurred his mule on violently; then turning round, and bending his head low, he galloped on me so quick, that I had scarce time to spring out of his way, and ask what he meant. 'It was a spring of my mule,' said he, 'cursed jade,' lashing the animal and falling behind me. 'I had better keep out of your way,' said I, crossing into another track. 'Ay, ay, you had better, if you can,' he muttered. Then darting forward, he disappeared among the thick tuft of brushwood on the right. I was startled for the first time at this motion, and followed him as fast as I could. It was in vain; he had a better knowledge of the wood and its dark ways; still I pursued him, though in a short time I could not even hear the sound of his mule's feet. But the wood opening suddenly to the right, I saw a large ruinous building that appeared like the remains of a good dwelling, fitted up for the residence of a woodman; there were no offices about it, no appearance of any country business being exercised by the owner—it looked strangely dreary. Marco was at the door, dismounted, and talking to an ill-looking man; both advanced when they saw me with an appearance of satisfaction. 'This is your host,' said Marco, 'this is Venanzio. You were rarely frightened when I galloped away and left you in the thicket—but I knew you would follow the track; few can miss it that have once set out in it.'

"'It was cursed foolish, however, to leave him,' said Venanzio discontentedly; 'he might have got away, and all pursuit of him be vain. Come, young man, alight; you will not be sorry of a good bed and quiet rest after your ramble to-day.' I alighted and followed him

into a large dreary room. A flagon of wine was on a large rustic table, around which sat one or two men, meanly dressed, with that peculiar wildness of face, which great indigence and remoteness of situation combine to give the inhabitants of a deserted country. They seemed undetermined whether or not to go away when we entered; but Venanzio, with an air of command, bid them resume their seats. They sat down again, eyeing me surlily. There was a miserable old woman in the room, buried in a dark corner of it, who also looked at me from time to time, with a peculiar expression, of which I could not tell whether the meaning was hatred or fear.

"We sat round the table and drank; little was said; and that little was broken and distant, full of allusions I could not understand, but which the rest seemed to consider as very significant. Marco drawing back his chair, measured me with a slow and steady look, from head to foot; and then nodding to Venanzio, began twisting his fingers into a knot, and drawing them afterwards with a straining motion together. Vernanzio only grasped the hilt of his stiletto firmly, but both desisted suddenly, when they beheld me looking at them.

"There came a boding sickness over me; I struggled with it, for I know not why I felt so. I attempted a conversation, for we had sunk to monosyllables and silent looks. The name of Venanzio I thought was familiar. 'Certainly,' said I to the host, 'I have heard your name before, though your namesake does not do it much credit.'—'Very possibly you might,' said he. 'The person to whom I allude,' said I, 'was a famous assassin in Messina; his atrocities were the most numerous and extraordinary I ever heard of.'—'Why do you say were?' said one of the fellows, 'I hear he is alive, and as wicked as ever.'—'Oh, curse him!' said another, 'I could forgive him anything but cheating his companions, as he did, when they had so handsome a price for their work.'"

"Venanzio looked surlily—'Perhaps,' said he, 'he was ill paid himself.'—'You seem to mistake me,' said I; the person of whom I speak was no mechanic; he was an assassin.'—'Well,' said one of them, 'and don't you know that such a one must have assistants? ay, and pay them well too (darting an angry look across the table), and must have work too—ay, bloody work, tearing work! ha, ha, ha!' (cutting out large splinters of the table with a clasp-knife, and forcing a horrid laugh). But of this man,' said I, though I scarce knew how to proceed, 'I heard he baffled every pursuit of justice, and after numberless murders and assassinations, being traced to the very sea-shore, hid himself in the tackle of a fishing vessel, and when the poor fisherman had begun to coast along the shore by night, with a lamp at his stern (for that is the mode of fishing there), Venanzio started up, and compelled him to put out and stand for Naples, and, on their arrival, immediately murdered his unfortunate pilot, lest he should betray him, and, interring him in the sand, changed his name and betook himself in disguise to the woods—this I learnt was his last exploit.'—'No, no, this will not be his last exploit, friend,' said one of them, 'take my word for it'—'You seem to know him,' said I. 'Too well.'—'Have you been a sufferer by him?'—'Incalculable,' said he, shaking his head. 'Do you ever see him now?' said I, pursuing him with simple importunity. 'As plain as I see any one at this table,' said he. 'And do you believe him to be alive still?'—'As sure as our host there is alive,' said he. 'Come,' said Venanzio, abruptly, 'enough of my namesake; perhaps, like many others, he is driven by want to blood; without doubt he repents by this time being entangled with ruffians, who suspect, and watch, and insult, but of whom he may one day get rid, as he has done of other incumbrances.' Two of them began to growl in a lower key at this, and the third, whose face was peculiarly savage, said, 'Ay, ay, few men know how better to throw off encumbrances than Venanzio; his life belongs to the hangman, his soul to Lucifer, and his honour to the first man that will offer him a dollar to cut his own father's throat.'

"He ended this sentence with a burst of wild sound, so unlike laughter, that it chilled the blood; yet it evidently spoke defiance and contemptuous hatred. 'His honour,' said Venanzio, uneasily, 'is unimpaired; he never betrayed or threatened his comrades.'—'No,' said the other eagerly, 'he is content to use them so ill, that it is not in his power to threaten; and to rob them so unmercifully, that it is not worth his while to betray them.' The others joined him in the conclusion of this sentence with emphatic bitterness, yet with a kind of forced and savage derision; their visages were inflamed, and their voices hoarse and broken.

"Our host seemed to pause and bethink himself for a moment; then, suddenly resum-

his arms on the table, and looking them stedfastly in the face, he said, in a quick, decisive voice, 'I'll tell you, comrades, one thing of this Venanzio, which shows he was a sensible, clear-headed knave; there were two or three dogs that he kept, sometimes to bark and sometimes to bite; now and then he threw them a bone to pick, which they did not think was enough for their services. They took particular care, whenever he had any business to do, to howl, and snarl, and disturb him; if a stranger came into their kennel, the whole set were in an uproar; all were raving to gnaw his bones and lap his blood, before Venanzio had time to carve him and give every one their share; whereat,' said he, stretching his brawny arm at full length on the table, 'he one night addressed them thus, 'Look'e, ye bloodhounds, if ever I hear ye again open your throats, by the holy cross I'll stop them with cold iron! Don't ye know, with a curse to you, that I am the life of you; that my name only preserves you from the pursuit of justice, lodges you, feeds you, employs you; that if I am lost, ye are undone; that no one will employ such miscreants but as spies, and then strangle them for their information! Where will ye go then, or what will ye do? Your chain is galling, and your food is bad; but what can such mongrels as you expect? No one would employ you, but to misuse and maltreat you; no one would keep you, but to trample on you. Your only employment would be to fly at beggars and mangle women and children; and if ever you stole from your haunts, fire, and sword, and poison, and curses would pursue you, and blast and scatter you till the very crows and vultures would clap their wings in despair, as they flew over you. Do you not know this, dogs? Hounds of blood and hell do you not know this, and will you dare to growl?'

"His fury was terrible; he rose erect, he stamped, his hairs bristled, his eyes flashed, his voice was a roar; he smote the table with a violence that made the panels start asunder.—'I heard the dogs grew quite peaceable after that,' said Marco.—'He watched them still, for he knew they were but dogs,' said Venanzio, with wrathful and venemous bitterness. His speech was so sudden, so vehement, so voluble, that I listened with stupid astonishment; I tried, in vain, to follow the metaphor, for his passion had broke it. I knew not at whom the torrent was directed; it seemed to awe the souls of every one present—all that had heard him shuddered, and were silent.

"But in the pause that followed, when the thunder of his voice died away, I began to comprehend, slowly and painfully, the meaning of all I saw; but the sting of agony was so piercing, so sudden, that I shook off the thought, as I would shake a reptile from my hand. It was too terrible to be believed. A gush of heat came over me, and then a deadly cold; my teeth chattered, though my cheeks were burning; cold, big drops of sweat, stood on my forehead. I swallowed my glass eagerly, and then another, and still I was like one in a dream who sees a hideous face, and tries to shut it out, but feels it spreading and growing on him, and staring at him from every side, till it seems actually to get within his eyes, and mount into his brain, and madden him. So I felt that thought; still I resisted it, yet still it was in my mind.

"'I am tired; I would be glad to see my room,' said I, rising, with that hopeless effort that looks for relief in the mere act of motion.—'You shall see it,' said Venanzio, rising: 'Ho! Bianca, bring a light!'—The old woman brought a light, which she held close to my face as she passed me. Her own resembled that of a sorceress: her earthy skin, her sunk red eyes, her ragged hair, with a peculiar look of glaring malignity, blazed full on me as she passed. My heart sunk within me. I followed Venanzio up a flight of narrow, ruinous stairs; he opened a door to the left, and led me into a room, like the rest, dark and wide. The bed was in a remote corner of it. Involuntarily I glanced at the windows, that were high and well secured. They were the only part of the building that seemed in repair.—'This is your room,' said Venanzio; 'I wish you quiet rest in it.' I turned to him as he spoke, to read hope or fear in his face; but he held the light so high that I saw only his dark head and brows as he bent over the bed.

"'Stay,' said I, as he was quitting the room, 'I will go down and take another flagon with you.' I was unwilling yet to be alone, though I had everything to fear from these men; yet still their presence gave me a kind of nameless refuge. I had a faint hope, too, that I might have misinterpreted doubtful expressions, or unpromising faces; and to the hope that flatters us with life, who would not cling as long as he can? Venanzio did not resist my going down. I was descending the stairs, when the old woman called out to me, that I had left my cloak in

the chamber.—'Go you, and fetch it for him,' said Venanzio.—Grasping at every omen that accident might give, I soon passed the old woman, who seemed to halt on purpose, and entered the room. I searched for my cloak all around it in vain. The old woman called out to me to examine a particular corner. I did so, and by the lamp that I still held I perceived that corner was dyed in blood. My own seemed to flow back on my heart. Venanzio called loudly for the light. I tottered down stairs, but he was gone. My eyes were dim, and when I reached the foot of the stairs I no longer distinguished the passages; they were dark and intricate. I wandered along, without perceiving the direction I took, till I was startled by the peculiar dreariness and loneliness of the part of the building I had reached. The wind whistled after me with a boding cry, and the ruinous casements rattled as if they were shaken by some forcible hand. I paused. The thought of escape came into my mind. All around me seemed deserted, and I felt that if I could once get into the forest I should have wings like a bird. I stepped on quick and lightly. The passage terminated in a low door at some distance. I approached it; it was open: but, as I drew near, I distinguished voices within—the voices of Marco and Venanzio. I had rather have heard the hissing of a serpent. Oh, 'tis a most dark and soul-sinking feeling, when you know every human being near you, every one who could help or comfort, who could understand or unite with you, is armed with a mortal purpose against you, and, secretly or forcibly, will and must overcome you! Hopeless of escaping in any other direction that communicated with the more inhabited parts of the building, and anxious to gather what I could from their conversation, I lingered at the door. They spoke in that low, muttering tone, that it is terrible to listen to; but my hearing was so quickened by apprehension that I did not lose a syllable.

"'Where is he now?' said Marco.—'He is above, not half-pleased with his apartment.'—'He will be less so when he finds it is to be the last he shall occupy; but why wait till he retires to rest?'—'I am afraid your retreats are suspected. I have observed more travellers passing near it than could have business in this wild wood; and I wish to have no voice or struggling till it is dark, and no traveller near. 'Twas for that reason I blamed your leaving him in the wood. He might have escaped; he might have taken a hint from that gloomy visage of yours, and fled; for, after so many years' residence, a child might baffle me in the windings of this wood; and then the first intelligence we should have got of him would have been a stiletto in your heart for suffering him to escape.'—'How could I avoid it? By my soul, I was as much alarmed as you, your not meeting me at the place, owing to Nicolo's blunders! Besides, I had almost forgotten the track. The fellow is almost as able I am; and, I'll warrant, would have grappled fiercely for his life. Once I was in the mind to have put him out of pain. I found my mule full a-head, and galloped on him; and if I could have thrown him to the ground, I would have dispatched him with a few strokes of the stiletto; but he sprung on one side, and avoided me.'—'And did he continue to ride with you still?'—'He did; he seems to have no suspicions, or Zeno and the rest would have alarmed him with their hints, and you with your fury in the chamber below. Ha, ha, ha! I could have laughed to hear him question so gravely a man about his own existence, and telling him stories of himself. Or do you think he was beginning to discover who you were, and tried that method to certify himself?'—'I know not. He appears simple and inapprehensive; yet, just now, in the chamber, I thought I saw a dark shade cross his countenance. His cheek was white, and his lip shook. But my eyes are none of the best. Strange things sometimes seem to pass before them: that cursed old hag, too—but I may be mistaken. I thought she left his cloak purposely in the corner where the monk was murdered, that he might take notice of the blood.'—'Ay, that was the business that incensed Zeno and the rest.'—'Ay,' repeated Venanzio, angrily, 'the rapacious dastards; they think, if they cut the throat of an unarmed peasant, or burn a hovel now and then, they have a right to the same rewards with men that have been employed with the first nobility, that have made princes keep them in humour and in pay; that have dispeopled a whole country by their mere name—the villains! because I have been hunted to this dark den, where I live in poverty and fear, and am sunk to the cutting the throat of a wretched, single domestic—they think——'—'Hush, hush! was that the wind? it sounded like a human groan: what dreary sounds come along these passages!'—'Ha, ha! why, your cheek is as pale as your fellow traveller's. It would cure you of these fancies to

live as I do here, listening to the sounds that sweep through this old building, and to others, of which I dare not think whence they come.'—'In the name of heaven, are you so beset? Why, it were better to follow our business in the heart of a populous city, as we did at Messina. There, we were only posted in the corner of a street some dark night; and when we had disposed of the body quietly in some vault or ruinous building, we could resort to jollity, to some house of entertainment, and drink away the memory of the night's work as soon as we washed the blood off our hands.'—'Ay, ay; but here, in the deserted haunts, in the dark forests, thoughts come to me that never came to me in Messina. I am not the man I was. 'Tis not that I repent. No. By the mass, I am no flincher! If the fathers of the Inquisition were preaching to me, they would not get me so much as to mutter a pater noster, or to sign a cross, though often—often I do it unawares, through fear, and in the weakness of the moment. But yet I know not how I feel. Marco, you know I am no visionary. Will you believe me when I tell you what I saw the other evening, as I sat in this chair, when the wind moaned through the chesnut trees, just as it does this evening?' Marco changed his posture to listen to the story. I moved away mechanically. It was not that I had a distinct fear of his presence. I believe, had they both rushed out on me, I could neither have resisted nor deceived them. I could not think a thought; but I staggered away, as from an intuitive and mortal sensation of dread at the sight or step of the murderers. I know not how I got down the passage, nor up stairs again; but I did so, and recollect leaving my lamp on the floor with the same quiet regularity as if I should ever have occasion for its light again; but then all sensation appeared to leave me. There was no doubt, nor shadow of hope; no refuge in thought for me. I knew all, and knew it all at once, and the worst at once; I should never leave that apartment; a few moments were all I had to live; death—sudden, unexpected death, what a desolating thought—how it sweeps the whole soul of man, with every resource of strength or hope, away! My eyes darted fire, visibly. I felt the sparks. My teeth chattered. Every pore was so wide that I felt the cold thick drops of sweat that every one sent forth. My hair rose, every hair sore with distinctness, and hissing on my head like a serpent. I gasped for breath. It was true and proper death that I thought was overtaking me. I tried to stir, but every limb was palsied. I tried to speak, and could only make a faint inward croak in my chest. The lamp, the ceiling, the floor, became ten-fold and a hundred-fold in a minute, and then disappeared at once. I know not how long I remained in this state, but surely, whenever I die, I shall twice taste the bitterness of death. I recovered at once. I was so fully awake, so conscious of all I heard and knew, that I sprung on my feet lest they should enter and take advantage of my helpless posture. I looked and listened around me. All was still, save the wind, that was now becoming tempestuous, and whose hollow rush came along the passage of my chamber like the sound of garments and footsteps, and waved the tall trees, whose shadows crossed the casement, making strange motions to a fearful eye.

"As I listened still, though hopeless of hearing a sound of comfort, I thought voices beneath the casement came scattering on the wind. They may be travellers in the forest; they might be those of whom Venanzio spoke. With the eagerness of sudden hope I climbed into the window-seat, and holding by the bars, looked below. There was a dim moon, often hid by the clouds that were driven along the sky; nor was twilight wholly gone. Below, I could at first see nothing but the tuft of trees; but as I looked closer, I saw a man, whose cloak, ruffled by the wind, I had at first taken for a branch. He held something in his hand which I could not distinguish. In a short time he was joined by another, whose head was bare. Their voices came up distinct and clear. The latter was Venanzio.

"'What are you doing here,' said he, 'always loitering when work is to be done?'—'I have not loitered,' said the other, sullenly; 'look at this mattock, and then look at the stubbed, tangled roots of this pine. Do you call it loitering to have dug the grave in such ground as this?'—'It is not long enough' (stooping to measure it; Oh! I saw every motion he made).—'Lengthen it yourself, then,' said the other, throwing down his mattock; 'a man were better work for the devil than you. Can I not dig a grave now? I was captain of as bold a band as ever trooped at a signal, when you were pitching up ducats at Messina for a coward's blow, and a flight in the dark.'—'Well, well, we need not quarrel; we both have seen better days and better work than butchering a sorry lackey: and yet that fellow appears inclined

to give us work too. He will require your bony arms or Zeno's to give him a firm gripe by the throat.'—'Will you not stab him then?'—'No, I'll have no more blood spilt, it stains the rooms, and gives strangers hints that it would be our wisdom to hide from them. You know how suddenly the pilgrims left us the other evening, of whom we thought ourselves sure. List, Nicolo, I'll have him strangled as soon as he is asleep. We will go and have another flagon in the room under him, and watch till he has lain down.'—'By my soul I would rather meet a man armed with a dagger, and strive with him hand to hand, than strangle a sleeping man. I am not myself for a month after. The black and staring face, the set teeth, the forced-out eyes, are with me wherever I turn. Maria! do you remember the last man that perished in that room?—still, how he struggled, and grasped, and tore out handfulls of Marco's hair in his agonies! he was horridly strong; the worse for him: there was no crushing life out of him. He heaved as we laid him on the ground; his eyes have never been off me since; I see them in the dark. Holy Mother! they are glaring on me from that pit—look—look, Venanzio.'—'Away, you fool! and what if they were? Can the eyes of the dead stab you?'—'They can, they can; take that mattock; I would not look into that hole again for the whole price of this night's work.'—'Ha, ha! listen to the blast that howls after you. Is that the dead man's cry? Ha, ha!'

"He pursued the scared ruffian with an hideous laugh. I let go the bar in utter agony and helplessness of soul, and fell on the floor. I had heard my death determined. I had seen my own grave dug—a sad sight, that few living men behold. Before the lamp burnt out, before the blast died away, before another hour, I should be a corse, swollen and stretched, and stark. My mind ran with astonishing swiftness through every circumstance of the past days. Oh, how I cursed your father's barbarity, for one offence so trivial and easy to be prevented for the future, to send me to a distance, where no cry could reach a human ear, to be butchered by cannibals; to disarm me by such promises and condescension; to keep me immured till I was weak and pliant, to leave me without the means of resistance or escape! Oh, how I cursed my own folly to trust him; not to profit by the many hints my dark companion gave—to go on like a sheep to the shambles! I recalled every circumstance that had escaped them, hinting the past possibility of my safety; I could have fled into the wood; I could have struggled with Marco; 'I was almost as able as he:' nay, yet—yet I might escaped in the windings of the wood, if it were possible to reach it. All these thoughts, and a million more, came to me so clear, so keen, so stinging, that I was almost mad. Oh, the bitterness of feeling life lost by one moment's folly, and not to be recovered by the fullest stretch of thought and action after?

"I seemed to myself to have thrust away my safety with both hands, and to have hunted and pursued away every chance of life, and run headlong into the snare that closed on me, and shut me round for ever. After a moment's sober and severe pain, I started into actual frenzy; I ran round the room, striking the walls, and grappling with the windows, and gnashing my teeth with rage of madness. I am astonished they did not hear the uproar I made. At length, I began to look round me more calmly; but still with the fiery penetration and glaring eagerness of insanity. I am convinced I was mad, yet one idea was still so clearly present and powerful with me, that I felt I was capable of exerting every force of my soul and body, while it continued to stimulate me. There was no furniture in the room; nothing that could present either a weapon of defence, or means of escape. Despairing, but still with forcible and unremitting intentness, in the dusky walls and floor it was not easy to discover any object; but poring on the latter by the light of the lamp, I discovered a panel, with a ring in it; it resembled a trap-door. I had little doubt of the use of such an instrument in such a place, and as little hope, that I could long lie hid in any place to which it might conduct me; yet still active from the restlessness of misery, I began to raise it, and succeeded.

"There was a dark cavity below, that I judged ran between the flooring of one room, and the ceiling of that below, which might possibly continue to some distance, or be connected with other cavities and passages. I got down, and scrambled to some distance in it: it was filled up with rubbish, which I struggled through, half stifled with the dust; but I soon found my passage obstructed. Some soft substance was presented to my hand; slowly and cautiously I withdrew it, and crawling backwards, brought it out with me; the lamp was still

on the floor, and by its light, I perceived I held a heap of bloody and decayed garments, pierced with more holes than those of decay. As I gazed on it, a wild blast shook the door, and raved round the walls: the flame of the lamp shivered, and blazed athwart and overblown.

"I looked around in terrible expectation of the wearer of the garments, that told a dark story, appearing to witness the discovery; strange shadows played on the walls, as the lamp burnt clear. After many bickerings, I replaced the garments, and again endeavoured to grope my way through the passage, in which I discovered a light on my second attempt. I crept on, and found by the sound, as well as the light, that it came through the broken ceiling of the room below, where the whole group were assembled, and seen distinctly through many an aperture. I heard my name often repeated, and saw some motions horribly significant when it was repeated. The blast was now so loud, and howled so fiereely through the broken rafters, over which I leaned, that I could not distinguish anything of their discourse but my name; nor perhaps even that, had not my senses been quickened to that exquisite keenness which the solicitude to overhear a conference about your own life can alone produce.

"In a short time I began to think I might, perhaps, make a better use of this passage than merely to overhear a conversation, of which I already knew the probable purport but too well; I crept on, therefore, with breathless caution, and found, to my inexpressible joy, that I had passed the room where they were assembled. The apertures were now more numerous, and I conjectured I was near some ruinous and perhaps neglected part of the building, from which escape might—might be possible; my obstructions grew fewer, too, and the passage itself wider, and I had no doubt of its being purposely constructed, and having therefore some certain outlet. As I crawled on I again perceived a faint light beneath, supported between two beams. I applied my eye to the largest hole near me, and perceived it proceeded from a dim lamp that burned at some distance below; the light it gave was so faint, that it was long before I could distinguish it burned in a large, desolate room, in the corner of which lay an obscure figure, stretched on a pallet. I gazed long before I could discover so much, and it was not till the figure turned, that I had a view of the most wasted and ghastly form I ever beheld, covered with rags that were steeped in blood. As the wind howled round his comfortless bed, I could distinctly hear his groans mingling with it. For a moment I believed him to be some victim of the ruffian band—but why then should his life be spared? At all events, I perceived this wretched object was in no condition either to resist or even to give an alarm to the rest: the cries he uttered were the weak tones of one worn with pain; if, therefore, I could let myself down into his room with safety, I had little doubt of escaping. His apartmenr must be near the extremity of the building, and I heard the casements shake in the wind. I felt such a resolution must be achieved in a moment: the murderers were now drinking, the storm was high, and the sufferer incapable of opposition; yet, not one of these circumstances might continue to favour me a moment longer.

"I began to examine the largest aperture, through which, when sufficiently opened, I had to descend, when I was checked by a loud noise from below—I desisted—a door opened, and one of those I had seen below entered with a lamp and some provisions, which he placed near the sick man, who appeared to decline them. The other spoke a few words of encouragement to him, from which I discovered that the sufferer was one of the band who had been wounded in some late attempt, and who was now lingering under the festering tortures of his wounds, without relief or hope, as they were apprehensive to procure assistance was to hazard discovery. After some careless consolation, he who brought the food was preparing to depart, but the other, in the infirmity of suffering, besought him to stay a few moments.—'I cannot,' said he, surlily, 'I must be gone; we have business on our hands to-night. There is one lodged near you, who, in half an hour, must change his resting-place for a cold and bloody bed in the forest.'—(In half an hour! Who, that has not heard his death denounced, and felt how dreadful it is to know and measure the approach of death, can tell what I felt at these words?)—'Oh, Saviolo,' groaned the penitent villain, 'talk not of those things to me; how can you mention them, and look on me stretched here, and think how soon the judgment of God may visit you for these things, as it has overtaken me.' Saviolo replied only by a muttered oath at his lamp, which a blast of wind had almost extinguished.—'Oh,' continued the dying man, 'if I could but have the benefit of some holy man; if I could but see a crucifix, and be taught one short prayer before I go hence. Dark and dreadful things are on

my conscience; no one knows what I know; I have more than the petty murders of an obscure villain to unfold; I was engaged in a horrid conspiracy against the peace and honour of a noble youth; oh, there were things once, that would deceive the devil, to deceive and ruin him, and I fear they have succeeded.' Again Saviolo cursed his lamp, which was almost extinguished, and looking around, fastened his eyes on the ceiling, through whose many holes the wind rushed in every direction.

"I saw him eye it suspiciously, and I drew back for a moment, terrified at the delay which his observation occasioned—for half an hour's chance for life who would lose a moment? and till he left the apartment no attempt could be made. He was again preparing to depart, when the sick man shrieked to him to stay—'Oh, stay,' said he, 'for the love of the mother of God, stay with me a moment; he is coming—I hear him in the wind.'—'Who is coming?' said Saviolo, stopping and turning pale, as the light he bore glared on his strong visage.—'The wicked one, the wicked one; he is with me every night; sometimes he stands beside me, and sometimes he rises through the floor before me. Oh, he is ever—ever with me, and soon I must be with him.'

"'Peace, peace, you driveller, turn to the wall, and close your eyes and try to rest; and look, if you should hear any cries within half an hour, don't come crawling from your bed as you did the last time, with those bloody swathes scaring us all before the work was well done.'—'Oh, Saviolo, dear, good, blessed fellow, do not leave me for a moment—for one moment; I see a hoof coming through the curtain.'

"Saviolo rushed out of the room with a curse that shook it, and the conscience-smitten wretch shrunk under his rags. Now was the time; one was gone with precipitation, and the other would probably shrink from anything he might see or hear moving near him. I had but half an hour to work for life. I began quietly, but swiftly, to remove large flakes of plaster, which were so dry that I found little difficulty in removing them and the thin laths to which they were attached. In a short time I had displaced enough to admit an arm or leg; I was afraid of making too wide a breach, as the materials were so infirm I feared they might sink under me, and supported myself on a beam while I loosened them. I tried to let myself down; the breach admitted me easily, and the beam supported me firmly. In the delirium of my joy I was unable for a moment to proceed, I was obliged to wipe away the tears of joy that prevented me from seeing my progress. I now measured the distance cautiously. I had at least twelve feet to fall, for the room was lofty; such a fall, however, could neither stun nor hurt me. I only dreaded the noise might alarm the ruffians; this, however, was not to be avoided. I determined, immediately on my descent, to rush across the room and spring through the window, or if possible to prevail on the wounded man, who appeared averse from blood, to inform me in what direction I might escape.

"I now let myself down silently, but expeditiously. The wounded man gave no sign of notice; I neither heard him start nor moan; I had sunk on the beams till only my elbows were supported, and was endeavouring to detach those and let myself drop, when by some untoward motion a large heap of the rubbish I had removed fell through the hole with a loud noise, and part lighted on the bed. The frighted wretch screamed aloud, and continued his cries so long, that though my intention was to leap down and implore him to be silent, I heard steps approaching before I could execute it or draw myself back almost into my hiding place.

"Saviolo re-entered, as usual, with a curse in his mouth, but I found the purport of his return was not to sooth but to threaten the sick man; and with horror I heard him say, 'Curse on your clamours, you will waken the man that is to be murdered, and give him a hint of where he is, and then we shall have a struggle instead of finishing him as he lies.' The terrified creature averred with earnest repetitions that some one must be in the room, from the noise he had heard and from the violence the roof appeared to have sustained. Saviolo appeared little inclined to believe him; the noises, he said, were imaginary, and the roof had been shattered by the storm, 'For just over your head there is a passage between the stories of the building with the extent of which none of us are acquainted, and through which the wind rushes with terrible fury; but at all events,' he continued, 'as they will not want me in this business, I shall stay with you and prevent you from crying out till it is over; they will have struggling enough with him, there is no occasion to wake and put him on his guard.'

"Oh, blessed Virgin and St Philip, with what agony I heard him cutting off my last

retreat, shutting up my last narrow breathing hole of life. He would stay, and it was impossible to descend; he was a brawny resolute fellow; a weaker man, struggling for life, might indeed have overcome him, but I was unarmed; he had a poniard and pistols stuck in his belt, and the very mode of my escape would expose me, as in descending I should probably fall. I lingered a few moments in the mere vacancy of despair, and then heard him tell the sick man that Zeno was about to go up, and discover whether the stranger was asleep, and that if he were, he was to inform the person appointed to strangle him, who would dispatch him immediately.

"At this terrible intelligence I was almost ready to dash myself down, and trust to a desperate chance of safety, for every probable one had disappeared; I was enclosed on every side; death actually stared me in the face; the immediate danger, however, I felt an irresistible impulse to escape from. If any of them should visit my room, and find it empty, he would quickly discover my retreat, and I should be butchered in that dusky hole without a struggle. Back, therefore, I crept, without a single hope to direct the motion; but with a blind resistance of inevitable evil; half smothered by the dust and rubbish, I scrambled through, crushing at every touch the eggs of the little domestic serpents, and displacing the nests of lizards and toads, whose cold slime made me shudder as I crawled amongst them.

"At length I reached my own apartment; and as I raised myself out of the trap-door, and caught the lamp that burned still beside it, I almost expected some hand would push me back into the cavity. The room was empty, and no one had been there in my absence. After a moment's debate I rose, shut the trap-door, placed the lamp on the table, and threw myself on the bed, concerting with calm desperation my last plan of deliverance. I had scarce lain down, when I heard a slow, heavy tread on the stairs; though I had arranged something like a means of escape, and though part of it was to admit Zeno into the room without resistance, as his intentions were not immediately murderous, yet there is no telling the agony with which I heard him approach—certainly approach, nor the miserable watchfulness with which I struggled to distinguish whether the steps were real, or whether I was deceived by the wind, whose force had made the ruinous stairs creak all night; it was a step, the step of the man who came to see was I prepared for murder. He came up softly, and I heard him pause at the door, and withdraw the bolts slowly, like one who fears to disturb a sleeper; I heard him in the room, I felt him approach the bed. I counterfeited deep sleep; as he came nearer I experienced a horrid sensation like that which accompanies the oppression of the nightmare; it was the struggle of nature within me; my resolution was to lie still; but nature moved within me to struggle or to fly. He came close to me, I heard him keeping in his breath; he bent over me, holding his lamp almost close to my face. I thought this might be a trial whether my sleep was counterfeited: but I dared not stir. I would have given the world to have looked at him under my eyelids at that moment; to have seen the expression of his face, whether there was compassion, or any relenting in it, but I dared not. Yet at this moment, while I yet doubted but he was examining whether he could not do the deed himself, and that, in the next instant, I should feel his stiletto in me before I even saw it drawn, even at that moment, will you believe me, signor? an irresistible propensity to laughter spread itself over my face; over my face I say, for in my heart was nothing but despair; yet was it irresistible; my features relaxed into something that felt to me like the motion of laughter, but struggling with the perturbation of fear, and the paleness of expected death. It appeared so different to him, that muttering inwardly—'Poor wretch, he sleeps uneasily,' he withdrew his lamp and quitted the room. I did not even dare to turn on my side, or unclose my eyes till he had shut the door. I counted his steps down stairs, and then rose instantly. I had no refuge now but in myself. All that intervened between me and death was removed. The next visitor was to have my blood.

"I hastened to the door, and secured it as well as I could. This was a means of delay, if not of defence. I then extinguished my lamp, and descended through the trap-door, and scrambled on to my former station, after drawing the trap-door after me as close as I could. As I crawled over the ceiling of their room I ventured to peep downward. They were still sitting; but, as I looked, one of them prepared to rise; then I durst look no longer. I crawled onward till I came over the room of the sick man. I looked downward. The sight was beyond the most sanguine calculations of my hope. The sick man was quiet; the lamp still

burned, and Saviolo was asleep. There was not a moment to be lost. I let myself down as quietly as I could through the hole in the ceiling, till I hung only on the beam with my hands. After suspending myself for some time, till I felt my own weight, and was released from all obstructions, I commended myself to St Philip, and let go my hold, and fell with less violence than could be imagined. The sleepers did not move. I looked around me for some time without venturing to stir, to be assured of the reality of my descent, with so little noise or danger, and that the tranquillity about me was not counterfeited. All was still. I rose; and creeping with that caution which none but such a situation can give or imagine, I began to explore the room. There was but one window; the lamp burned in the hearth, before which Saviolo was sleeping in a chair. Scarcely touching the ground, I proceeded to pass him. When I was opposite him I involuntarily stopped, and, with an impulse I could not resist, looked full at him. His eyes were wide open, and intently fixed on me. My terror did not conquer my reason. After a moment passed in the stupor of fear, I perceived he made no use of his observation; he neither spoke, nor offered to stop me. I ventured to look at him more closely, and I perceived, from the fixed and filmy glare of eye, that he was still asleep. A moment's thought confirmed my confidence. I had often heard of people who slept thus, particularly those whose minds are gloomy or perturbed. I now withdrew myself quietly, and placed the lamp at some distance, lest its light should act too strongly on the exposed and dilated organs of sight. I glided across the room to the window. It was a large casement, that appeared, from its structure, to be moveable; but with most distressful apprehension I perceived that to reach it I must step across the pallet of the sick man, nay, actually step on it.

"After what had happened, however, without disturbance or discovery, I had some hopes that a light step would be unfelt and unheard. I rose, therefore, on one foot, and reaching across the bed, laid hold of the frame of the casement. A terrible blast that rushed against it that moment, almost made me fear it would be shattered in my hold. I released it for a moment, and looked round me with fear. I heard only the heavy breathing of Saviolo, and the groaning of the old ruinated ceiling as the wind swept over it. I felt these delays of fear would be endless; and, resting my knee on the frame-work, and holding it with both hands, drew my foot from the bed, when the sick man with a faint cry, like that of weak surprise, extended one arm, and caught me by the ancle. In that scene, reason, life, seemed to forsake me. I neither felt nor thought; I neither struggled nor spoke. I grasped the frame with a force that shook it, and fixed my hollow and bursting eyes on the hand that held me. For my liberty, for my life again, I would not live over the two moments that elapsed, before I perceived that he had grasped me in the agonies of pain, involuntary, unconscious, and yet asleep; that he had laid hold of the first thing that was next his hand, and held it without being sensible of the act, or of any relief from it. But this discovery consoled me but little. He might hold me till escape was impossible; and to liberate myself by a struggle, would be to wake him. With anguish, therefore (such as none but he who counts but a moment between him and death—death, aggravated by the near chance of safety, and the certain increase of suffering, has ever felt) I awaited the dissolution of his hold as my only hope of life. In two moments, with the same suddenness of motion, he released me, and, with some inarticulate moans of pain, turned to the other side. The instant he released me, I felt such a gush of heat through me, that I almost relinquished my hold of the casement from weakness. In a moment, however, I collected myself, and attempted to open the casement. This was done with difficulty; yet I dared not look behind me, lest I should see Saviolo's eye upon me. It was done, however, and I looked out on the free air and the open woods. The night was now utterly dark, and the tempest terrible. I could hear the roar of the forest below; but knew not whether I should be in the forest on springing out of the window. For deliberation there was no time; nor could it teach me anything. Around, above, and below me were only tumult and darkness. I threw myself out of the window. I alighted, after a rapid descent, upon something solid. This gave way under me, and I felt myself falling again, with more pain, and through more obstruction than before. At length I reached the ground, sore and bruised. Everything about me was soft and damp, otherwise, I am convinced, I must have broken my limbs with my double fall. At a little distance from me, I heard the growling of a dog and the rattling of a chain. I did not dare to stir, nor even to examine whether I was hurt or not, lest he should betray me by his barking. In a moment, however, I began to

reflect I had gained but little besides bruises and danger by throwing myself out of the window; I could be as easily discovered and murdered in a shed, which I believed my present abode to be. I rose, therefore, as quietly as possible, but sunk down again, from utter inability to stand. I found I had either sprained or broken the limb on which I alighted. Another thrill of agony ran through me at this discovery, keener than the pain that followed my vain attempt to stand; but however reluctant or perturbed, I was obliged to sink down upon the damp straw that was spread over the ground. In a few moments the moon broke through the clouds, and shining with strong light, discovered every object around me. I was in a large shed, rudely constructed of mud and the branches of trees, and covered but partially with straw. I could not see whether it was connected with the principal building, but it was open everywhere, yet I could not escape. The roof was broken through where I had fallen, and through the fracture I had a view of other parts of the building, rude and ruinous, and dimly seen, from amid dark clouds, and masses of forest shade, that were spread around them. The anguish of my mind would, I believe, have again risen to madness, had it not been qualified by a kind of stupid satisfaction at the idea of being so far from the persons and weapons of the murderers, and a dream of impossible hope, that I might be concealed by being where it was not probable any would search or suspect, from its nearness to the house. Thus pacified by contrary expectations, of which, nevertheless, the love of life rendered both probable, and compelled to reconcile myself to remaining where I was, since to stir was impossible, I sunk down, but still kept my eyes fixed on the building—still listened eagerly for a sound. In a short time I beheld a light moving slowly up a part of the building just opposite. It was so dim, and proceeded with such frequent pauses of mischief-meaning delay, that at once I conceived it was the person employed to murder me who was ascending to my room. I attempted to stand upon my feet, but the impulse was unable to contend with pain and infirmity. The light stopped, and disappeared for some time. In a moment after the whole building echoed with cries of astonishment and quick voices, that called and answered each other, and lights darted and disappeared at every window in my sight. All this I interpreted aright: he had gone up to my room, found it empty, and was now alarming the rest to pursue and discover me. All this I was obliged to know, with a consciousness, that if any chance should direct them to where I was concealed, I was inevitably lost. After half an hour's intolerable suspense, during which every part of the building seemed to undergo a search, I distinctly heard them going out in another direction, apparently that by which I had entered the house, and which was opposite to the part of the building where the sick man lay. This was an intimation of safety to me; but still how precarious was that safety! any of them might take the direction where I was—a casual impulse, a motion unaccounted for, might bring one of them to my shed. Their voices, however, became more and more distant, and their whistles and holloes echoed from the remotest parts of the wood, as the wind bore them faintly to my ear. The hope of life revived within me, when I heard that devil, Saviolo, who, it appeared, had been awakened by the uproar in the house, and joined with the rest in searching it for me, bending from the window just over me, exclaim, 'Here, here, this way; he must have escaped through this window; it is open—search for him here!' I drew in my breath, and listened in despair. There was no answer—they were out of hearing. I heard him cursing their stupidity, and muttering something, as if he was about to descend himself. I tried to rise, and found, with the surprise of unspeakable joy, that my hurt had been trivial; I was now able to stand and to walk but feebly. Any degree of recovered capacity was matter of hope to me now, though I was still unable to make any considerable exertion for my safety. I crept towards the mastiff who was chained near me, and whom I had some hope of making serviceable to me. He growled fiercely at me; but as I drew nearer, to my utter astonishment, he stretched out his neck, and fawned on me with the utmost gentleness. I knew him almost as soon: he was a dog I had in Naples, who followed me everywhere, and fed from my hand; and though it was four years since I had lost him, he knew the first tones of my voice. Surely this was the providence of St Filippo.

"I had scarce time to slip off his chain, when a door opened near me, and, through the chinks of the shed, I saw Saviolo approaching, holding up a lanthorn, and looking round suspiciously. His drawn dagger was in his hand. He came up to the shed slowly but directly, and, entering it, saw me instantly, and, with a yell of joy, rushed towards me. I had formed

my plan, and, urging the dog with my voice and hands, the faithful animal flew at him like a tiger, and, fastening in his cloak, dragged him to the ground and held him there, as if awaiting my orders. Saviolo, with a cry of horror and the visage of a fiend in pain, begged his life with the most abject language of fear and agony. I told him that I had no intention to destroy him—that I wished to fly from destruction myself; but that my safety required me to secure him till I should effect my escape. I desired him, therefore, to throw away his dagger and his pistols. 'You will murder me if I do,' said the villain, with a horrible mixture of fear and malignity in his face, for he had no thoughts but of treachery and blood.—'I will not,' said I, 'nor would I, for worlds, be a wretch with such murderous hands as you. Throw away your dagger and pistols, and you are safe; keep them another moment, and that dog shall tear you to fragments.'—He threw them to some distance. I took them up, and armed myself with them. He watched me with a fearful eye; he could not comprehend that any one could have another in his power without making a sanguinary use of it. I then compelled him to tell me where I should find the horses of the band, what direction they had taken, and whether they had left the house. I dared not ask him the way through the forest, as he would probably have pointed the way of danger. I now called off the dog, who released him in a moment; when the wretch, snatching a short knife from his breast, plunged it into my preserver's throat, who instantly expired. The vehemence of his motion was such that I scarce perceived him turning on me. I closed with him, and, after an obstinate struggle, wrested the knife from him. I could scarce forbear burying it in his heart when I got it. I struck him to the ground in my rage, and when he rose, I bound him with some ropes I found in the shed to a post in it, and left him, grinding and gnashing with his teeth, and spitting at me, with the contortions and fury of a demoniac.

"I found the horses where he told me, and immediately mounted one of them. From the circumstance of their not being employed by the band, I could only gather that they believed me to be at no very considerable distance: they were, therefore, probably all around me; but if I could get beyond the immediate region of the house, I believed I should be safe. I went out in the direction opposite to theirs. I need not tell you of my wandering in the wood, how often I quitted the track, and concealed myself in the thicket, which I quitted the next moment, from the fear of what had impelled me to seek it—how I dreaded to proceed, and yet was unable to stop—how I listened in horror to the wind, and the hollow whistle that ran through the wood, mixed with it—how I thought the whisper of murder was in the underwood, as it hissed in the breeze—and how often I recoiled as the tossing branches of the trees flung a sudden shadow across the way. I got out of the wood, after all my terror, safely, about the morning dawn; but I was no sooner freed from one danger than the fear of another as urgent smote me.

"Whither could I go, or to whom? I had escaped miraculously from your father's hands, but I knew they could reach me in any part of Italy. Where could I fly that money could not purchase my blood? He might list a whole army against a single wretch; and, on a long chase, I knew St Filippo himself could be no match for him. I believe, signor, you will think the result of this debate was actual madness. I pursued my way eagerly to your father's castle. I determined to go directly to him—to present myself before him. At a distance from him I knew there was no safety; but I felt that this strange confidence might ensure my safety with him.

"Without further danger or adventures I reached the castle that very evening. The servants, who did not appear to know the plan about me, admitted me without surprise. I desired immediately to see the count. I was conducted to him. He was alone when I entered, and the tapers, which were but just lighted, burnt on a table near him, so that he could scarce distinguish me till I was close to him: he then sprang almost off his chair, and continued to stare at me for some moments with a look of vacant horror. During that time I could not speak—I could not recover myself; the temerity of my purpose appalled me in the moment of execution.

"At length I said, in low and hurried tones—'My lord, you are surprised to see me here. The villain with whom I travelled had designs upon my life; I discovered them and escaped. Listen to me, my lord. You have suspicions of your son Annibal; no living creature but myself can verify them. Whatever knowledge I possess will be lost to you, if I perish; and

whatever may yet be gained from your son can be gained only by me, for I possess his confidence, and he believes me attached to his person. I can serve you more effectually by my life than by my death—I can serve you more effectually than any of the villains employed to murder me. Mark me, my lord; my death may ruin you—my life may serve you. If I were this moment dragged from your presence, or stabbed before it, a thousand tongues would tell it; if I were even immured in your dungeons, and poisoned, and buried secretly there, my disappearance would excite suspicion, and that suspicion would persecute you to the end of your days, and perhaps abridge them. Let me live then; I will be faithful, from fear and from gratitude. No villain, hired by the price of murder, can be so faithful as he who serves for life—for life restored and confirmed. While at a distance from you, I might have saved myself by flight, but I fled hither, because I knew my life was important to you as well as to myself.'

"Was not this a bold effort for life? I knew it was my only one—I knew, besides (and believe me, signor, even in that painful moment I felt the force of that consideration), that my success might be of the most material consequence to you—that, if I was believed, I would be admitted to you, might talk with, plan with, perhaps escape with you; that your sufferings would certainly be mitigated, perhaps your life preserved.

"The effect produced on the count was what my hopes had anticipated; he was overpowered by the suddenness of my appearance and language; and whatever attention the hurry of the moment allowed him, was impressed by what I said, by the promises of present discovery, and of future services. He waved me, however, to leave him. I urged him still for a promise of safety; he gave it on his honour, and I departed satisfied.

"As I left the room, I could not but wonder at myself; my very existence seemed a prodigy to me—what no power of body or mind, on their fullest stretch, could have effected for me, one effect of lucky rashness produced for me—the pacification of an enemy, powerful and inexorable; the escape from a danger that threatened me every hour of life, and in every part of the world. I mixed among the domestics, and wondered they did not feel the same surprise at my living appearance that *I* was conscious of, without reflecting, that of my disappearance they did not know the cause, nor would perhaps ever have known it.

"In a short time I was again summoned to the count. I found Father Schemoli with him, that sight of evil omen. The looks of both were fixed on me, as if they would search my soul; a moment after they exchanged looks, that seemed to express I was too much in their power to be an object of dread to them. I approached, and was instructed in what they expected from me. I did not understand till then how my offers of service were understood; it was then evident that I was to be employed as a spy; that my having been honoured with your notice and confidence was to be made a means of extorting from you some knowledge, which they did not describe very clearly, but of which they seemed determined to get possession. My attachment to you made me shudder at this proposal, till I recollected, that to appear to enter into their measures was the best way to defeat their mischief; and that to betray my indignation and horror at them, would be only to sacrifice my powers of serving you to an unseasonable display of my zeal. I listened to them, therefore, in silence, and by holding down my head in a posture of deep attention, concealed the changes that my countenance underwent. I never knew so much of the iniquity of the human mind; I could not believe so much had existed in it as I heard manifested in the directions given me for acquiring the knowledge of this secret they believe you to possess. The object was simple, but the means were crowded with such superfluous and complicated knavery, the lessons of falsehood and deceit ran from them with such facility, that they seemed, compared with their usual habits of speech, like foreigners, who are suffered to speak their own language, and who compensate, by their sudden volubility, for long restraint and silence. They seemed to speak a new and natural language. I promised strict obedience, and affected to profit by their documents; and at length was dismissed with an assurance, that my fidelity was the only security of my life; that on the discovery of the slightest tendency to duplicity, my punishment would be what I could neither conceive nor avoid. I was then given these keys with a direction to visit you, and all plans of escape were banished by the thought of seeing you; but I am permitted to be often with you, to attend you in the place of the confessor—nay, to pass hours in your apartment. These are my instructions, and it will be

strange, if with such advantages, both for planning and executing, we should continue long in durance."

"I was as willing as Filippo could be to let the satisfaction of the present moment supersede all provision for the future. I dwelt, with a pleasure I did not try to restrain, on his simplicity, his strong attachment, his miraculous escape; and felt that, whatever might be the success of any plans we might form, my mind, spent with unnatural force, would find relief in their discussion, or even in the circumstances that made their discussion possible.

"I collected myself, however, enough to remind Filippo that the present juncture required the most dexterous conduct; that it was not impossible even the present indulgence was only a stratagem of deeper mischief; that it was necessary for him, at all events, to amuse my father by promises of success in his employment; otherwise his visits would be obstructed, and probably his life sacrificed to their disappointment or their suspicions; that he must frame his reports so as to bear a due relation in point of time to the execution of any measures we might have adopted, so as neither to compel us to precipitate or delay them, but just gain the proper time for their adjustment. Above all, I charged him, with an earnestness he did not understand, to observe the confessor, and repeat to me every instance of his deportment he could remark or remember. Our conference extended to a late hour, and I was compelled to drive him away; for something like hope began to flutter within me, and I determined not to sacrifice its promises to a casual indulgence.

"He was hardly gone when I wished to recall him. The terrors of the hour that was approaching I shrunk from meeting alone. As my visitor threatened, every night his appearance was becoming more terrible, and its expectation more insupportable to me. I dreaded in what this might terminate. He had darkly spoken of the possible subversion of my reason; I felt all the horrors of this prediction. There is no evil like the expected or approaching loss of reason; there is no infliction that cannot be tolerated in imagination but that which sweeps all power of provision, resistance, or mitigation of any other. Even in the present state of my mind, this sensation was exquisitely painful, as it in a manner verified what of all things I was unwilling to believe true, viz., the agency and power of that singular being. I shuddered inwardly with reluctant conviction, with that irksome feeling that cannot dispute the evidences, yet hates to admit the conclusion. One circumstance relative to his appearance (which might in a great measure assist me to judge of his supernatural pretensions), I believed myself enabled to discover still—the mode of his entrance into my apartment. If, as it seemed, he was a being that could glide through walls, and overcome material obstructions, I could resist no longer the belief of whatever he might disclose. If he required the assistance by which human beings pass from one part of space to another, I rejoiced in the hope of discovering his imposture and obtaining a triumph over this wonderful being, whose superiority to humanity mingled envy with my astonishment. While I was occupied by these thoughts, a strange drowsiness crept over me; I resisted it at first, without an apprehension of its influence being so strong; but, in a short time, I felt all power of thought gliding from my mind.

"Half angry at so unseasonable a weakness, I arose, and began to walk about the room; it was in vain. In a short time, from utter incapacity of motion, I was obliged to throw myself on the bed, where a deep sleep fell on me. It did not continue long; I awoke, I know not how. Before I was fully awake, I felt my eyes were in search of Father Schemoli; they discovered him, as usual, sitting by the table on which my lamp was burning still.

"Without betraying any emotion, without uttering a single word or interjection of fear, I continued to gaze on him, expecting something more than I had yet heard to proceed from him; the idea of his supernatural power involuntarily mixing with my own thoughts, produced a full conviction in me, that he was acquainted with the real object and topic of Filippo's conference with me, and I awaited his declaration of it with as full reliance as if he had been present at our conversation; but he spoke without allusion to that or any subject but the constant one of his visits. On that he poured forth a flood of supernatural eloquence, which I no longer attempted to resist or to interrupt. It was terrible to hear him—the admiration that follows impassioned oratory was lost in more strange and awful feelings; there was evidently something of the power and evidence of another world about him. Delight was checked, yet heightened by terror; and attention was often suspended by the wonder how man could

hear him and live. The mind rose to the level of the speaker; I felt myself upborne and floating on the pinions of his voice over the confines of the invisible world, over the formless and the void. I felt it with a wild and terrible joy—a joy that made me as strange to myself as everything around me was—a joy that, from the very giddiness of its elevation, precluded me from measuring the height to which it had raised me—the remote point at which I stood from the common feelings and habits of human nature. I know this was a strange and wayward frame; I wonder at myself; I can hardly describe or render it probable; but I have heard of beings, who, with unnatural strength of feeling, would hang on a bare and single point of rock to see the ocean in a storm; would rush out to cross the forky lightnings in their dance, or howl to the storm as it bent the forest or shook the mountains to their base. I have heard of such, but scarce believed such a feeling could exist in a human breast till I listened to this strange being, and listened with pleasure as strange. But this night, whether encouraged by my silence or whether in the progressive fulfilment of his commission, he spoke more openly of its object, he dared to tell me I was doomed to be a murderer. A murderer did I say? Compared to the crime, which he affirmed I would perpetrate, that of murder might be termed a benefaction, an honour to society. In language of horrid strength, without pause, or limit, or mitigation, again and again he affirmed it; nay, described its mode and circumstance, the process of preparation my mind would undergo, the gradual unduration of my heart, and sealing up of my mind and conscience, with that penetrating and emphatic minuteness that proved an intimacy with the inmost heart and spirit of man, from which I shrunk in vain—in vain tried to shelter myself by arguing from the futility of his reasoning and descriptions, to the futility of his prediction.

"But though I could not work myself into incredulity, I tried to work myself into rage; I endeavoured to awe or to repel him by my fury. I demanded how he dared to impute to me such crimes? Was I not a free agent? Had I not the power of choosing one mode of action, and declining another? To the perpetration of such horrors as he predicted nothing but insanity could drive me, and insanity would relieve me from the burden of consciousness as well as the guilt of volition. I charged him in my turn, successively, with being an impostor, a maniac, and lastly, an evil spirit, embodied and empowered to work my eternal woe, and confirm his own by his infernal triumph. I abjured all further commerce with him; I heaped him with reproach and malediction. I stopped my ears, I closed my eyes against him; only my voice was free, and with that I cursed and bid him begone. When the bellowings of my rage had ceased, and the echoes of my prison were still, he burst into a laugh; my blood curdled to hear him, and when I raised my eyes to him he was gone.

"The impression he left with me was stronger than any preceding night, but it was more tolerable; the sense of oppression or persecution wakens us to rage and to resistance. There was something so determined and tenacious in these nightly hauntings, so persevering and obtrusive in his mention of the subject I had abjured and refused to listen to, that I felt it like a challenge to my powers of resistance, and I met it with my full strength of mind. There now appeared to be an obvious and definite ground whereon we were to contend; a trial of powers common to both; his, of importunate persecution, and mine, of unremitted opposition. I pleased myself in collecting the forces of my mind, and ascertaining the ground and point of our conflict. I resolved, if I must yield, not to yield without a vigorous struggle. I forgot, that by all this I only confirmed the identity of my torment; only gave it form and substance, instead of endeavouring to dissipate it as the vision of solitude, as the dream that floated on the heavy vapours of my dungeon.

"They must repose great confidence in Filippo. They have this day permitted him to bring me materials for writing. These were indeed welcome. Like others, I trifled with my indulgence for the first hour. I scrawled the paper over with strange figures; but when I examined them I was struck with the number of instruments of death and punishment I had described among them; how strong a tincture my mind communicates to trivial and indifferent things.

"Filippo tells me they continue to importune him with questions about me, and the knowledge he had obtained from me. 'I have told them,' said he, 'a plausible story about your former visits to the tower, and about the communications you are daily making to me. But I

take care not to make any extravagant or momentous representations, lest they should expect some verification of them from your movements or sentiments, which it would be impossible to give. In the meantime their suspicions are eluded and time is obtained, which is all we require.

"It must be obvious to you, that in his narrative and conversations I have always translated Filippo's language. The vulgar often express themselves with force, particularly in descriptions, but they are insufferably tedious, and abound in repetitions. Nor, since I retained the substance of his narrative, was it necessary to retail his idioms and vulgarisms.

"He sits by me, and talks of plans for our escape—talks merely, for even his sanguine disposition cannot trace a vestige of rational hope in any he has yet proposed. The castle is too well guarded; full of domestics all day and every passage locked at night. He believes it to be filled with subterranean passages and secret recesses, but even if we reached them we might perish in them by fatigue and hunger.

"I have now begun my journal, and within these three days wrote the preceding account. You must henceforth only expect it in fragments.

"Filippo often looks at me with unspeakable solicitude. He confesses to me I am so altered, so reduced and haggard in look and abstracted in manner, that he cannot believe such a change to be produced merely by my confinement. He importunes me with an earnestness I often find it difficult to resist, but must not yield to. He would either think me a maniac or a being leagued with and under the power of some evil spirit. The very name of Father Schemoli (of whom he has notions justly terrible) would inspire with terror, and perhaps even his attachment might not be proof against the aversion which the idea of our intercourse might produce.

"'Signor,' said he, 'there was a man in a village where I was born who believed himself haunted by the evil one, and that the object of the temptation was to make him commit murder. He told this in confidence to some one, who pressed to know the occasion of his constant melancholy; and he told it to another, and in a short time every one shrunk away from the poor wretch as if he had been a real murderer. No one would meet him alone; no one would pass near his house at night; no one would sit near him; for whether they believed him really beset, as he described, or only visionary, it inspired them with a dread and a suspicion that made every one shun him as some evil thing. After lingering some time in utter solitude he at length disappeared, and strange things were whispered about his departure.

"'Some months after that, however, we heard of an extraordinary murder committed at Venice. The murderer had had no enmity to the person he killed, nor even any knowledge of him. He had inquired his situation in life; and, on learning that he had no relations who would suffer by his loss, that his character was good, and he had come that moment from receiving absolution, he exclaimed, "That is my man," and immediately stabbed him. He then surrendered himself to justice, said he was perfectly sensible of his crime, and desired no mercy, but he had taken care that his offence should be attended with as little injury as possible, either to society or to the sufferer.

"'When we inquired the name of this extraordinary man, we learned he was the very individual who had left our village. Now, signor, you must forgive me; but no human being ever looked as that man did but you. You have exactly his dark, fixed eye, and that peculiar contraction of the forehead and hollowness of the cheek. I saw him the morning before he disappeared: he was tracing some lines in a bed of withered leaves, over which he bent; and as you hung over your paper just now, drawing those melancholy lines, you were the picture of him. Do, signor, tell me, for the love of grace, what it is thus presses on your mind? It is something else than your confinement, I know. When I speak of that you are quite easy and resigned, and listen to all I can say with composure; but if I mention night, or solitude, or the confessor to you, your countenance changes that I scarce know it.'

"You may conceive with what pain I heard him. The sympathy the unfortunate subject of his story had met with, taught me what I was to expect from a similar disclosure. I silenced him as soon as I could; but, as he left the room, he murmured something about Father Schemoli. Is my persecution written on my forehead? Can the very menials read that I am tempted to murder? If so, 'twere almost better committed: there would be less suspicion, and less of 'fear which hath torment.

"His visits are unremitting, and his persecutions increasing in force and frequency. He now names the object of it directly, proposes means, and, without remitting his mysterious character and language, discusses them with a familiarity that chills my blood.

"What shall I do? I am strongly beset; I am sore pressed and straitened. Would to heaven I could make my escape from this durance. Even if he has the power of pursuing me, may not that power be diminished or increased by the circumstances of time or place? He hinted that himself. He talked of his power being limited to a certain hour and spot. If I could but fly from him, if I was to hear the terrible voice no more; to lay my harassed head where one night would be unbroken by these visits of horror. He has no longer the power of feeding curiosity or of fascinating imagination; my only sensation at his presence is unmixed aversion, mortal repugnance, and fear. It is not to be wondered at. No human mind can longer endure the pitch mine has been strained to lately. It must relieve itself by insanity, or by a deep and motionless stagnation of its powers. The objects that have occupied me are not the natural topics of human meditation; the mind can only bear to see them remotely, and partially, and transiently; it cannot confer with and be habitually conversant with them, without changing its properties, nay, its very nature. The distant cloud, whose skirts are indented with lightnings and whose departing thunders roll their last burthen on the winds, we can bear to follow with the eye, and feel our hearts quelled and elated with the fluctuations of grateful horror; but who could bear to live for ever in the rage and darkness of the tempest—to sport with the lightnings that quivered around him, and grasp at the bolt that rushed to blast him? My mind is utterly changed. I shrink from these things, and would fly back to life for shelter if I could. I feel a kind of indignation at the perversion of my powers. Why should I be shut up in this house of horrors, to deal with spirits and damned things, and the secrets of the infernal world, while there are so many paths open to honour and pleasure, the varieties of human intercourse, and the enjoyment of life? I struggle to regain the point I have quitted—to feel myself a man and amongst men again—to 'confer with flesh and blood.'

"What are these bodings that oppress me? Must I never return to life—never be myself again? 'Tis but the involuntary recollection of his words. I cannot dismiss, but I will not believe them. He tells me my first stirrings of curiosity, my conferences with Michelo, my visits to the tower and to the tomb, were a series of acts which I could neither produce nor forbear, which belonged to that great chain of agency that bound me to him and him to me indissolubly—a chain which I could neither forge nor break—of which one link could neither be added nor detached by the power of all nature. I will not believe this, yet how consistent is it with the the process of my feelings! how suddenly did I rush into the pursuit, without any preparation of mind or of circumstance! This was not natural nor right; nor did I feel any surprise at the greatness or suddenness of the transition from quietness and indifferency to the rage of sudden zeal, the impetuosity of resistless activity. This was not natural either. How do I heap up arguments to my own confusion! How do I set out resolved to disbelieve an assurance, yet employ myself only in collecting proofs of it, and observing the repugnance I pretended to confirm! Curse on the impulse, whether fated or voluntary, that first led me to the pursuit! What motive summoned me to it? My conscience was clear and my rest quiet. Who made me an inquisitor of the secrets of blood, a searcher of the souls of men? What had I to do with it? No voice called on me; no hand beckoned to me; I was warned neither by dream nor vision; my officiousness was wilful; my obstinacy was incorrigible. What if I had heard these dark reports, had I a right to investigate them? If a pit opens at my feet, am I to plunge into it to examine the cause? Could I not have walked over the unsafe and suspected ground I was led to, with the quiet fear, the shrinking caution, with which a child passes over the place of graves? Whatever secrets may be around and beneath him, he cares not, so he may get safely through them. He treads lightly, lest he should break their tremendous sleep; he will scarce breathe, lest it should sound like a call to them; he will scarce name the divine name in the stifled prayer of fear, lest it should have some unknown power in that place of awe.

"Oh, that I had thus glided past this pursuit! The fatal affectation of supernatural dignity, the conscious pride of the agent of Heaven, the chosen instrument of him (to be the dust of whose feet is above all earthly power), this, this undid me. It is a sensation rarely felt;

the modes of life seldom admit it, the heart of man has scarce room for it, but it is of surpassing and magnificent power. Would I could exchange it for the most timid humility, for the most servile ignorance, for the most impotent superstition that ever depressed the human breast! Such are safe from danger by the excess of fear, instead of being, as I am, mated and leagued with these horrors, blended in unhallowed intimacy with what it is frightful and unlawful for human nature to know. Would I were the gossip crone, who, shivering over her single faggot, crosses herself to hear such things named, and trembles to see her dim and single light burn blue while the tale goes round, or the child that seems to sleep at her feet, lest he should be sent to rest before it is finished, and imagination fill it up too well when he is alone, and in darkness—would I were one of those! Their fear, their ignorance, is their security. Heaven never selects such instruments for its higher purposes. They may eat their humble bread and drink their water in peace, while the servant of heaven, who tarries on his way, is torn by a lion. They may remain, like their own rustic hills, covered with useful verdure and content with quiet beauty, while those, whose deep roots extend to the world beneath, whose feet have supplanted the foundations of the earth, are impregnated with fire and destruction, blast all the region around them, and are rent and ruined by their own explosion. Why did I assume this fatal responsibility? What were the crimes of others to me? The whole world might have laboured with some prodigious discovery, yet I might have passed my life in it, unsolicitous and unconscious of it. These things do not come in quest of us; 'tis our fatal curiosity that removes the natural barrier of separation. The earth on which I trod might have quaked and groaned with untold secrets; every breeze might have brought to my ears the cry of an unappeased spirit; the tapers that burned before me might have been tipt with blue; the very dogs might have crouched and shivered with a consciousness of invisible presence; I might have set every step upon an untimely grave, and slept every night in a chamber stained with secret blood; so I had known nothing of it. my sleep would have been quiet and my mind undisturbed; I would have passed through life as calmly as the sea-boy sleeping in the shrouds, while the spirits of the storm are mustering and hurtling in the blast that lulls him to rest. A search into the secrets of crimes we have not been privy to, is like an acquired faculty of seeing spectres. Before its attainment, all was safety and innocence; after, solitude becomes uneasy and darkness terrible. The consciousness of guilt is as bad as the commission. He who obtains the knowledge of another's crimes shares their burthen and their torment; he is either summoned to expiate them, and forced from the quietness of life, and the natural current of human action, to a line of daring and desperate adventure, which he pursues without sympathy and without reward—(for the feelings attached to that state are too uncommon for participation, and its termination is not his own exaltation, but the punishment of others)—or he sinks into the partaker of another's crimes by forbearing to disclose them. He suffers more than the real agent; his painful consciousness is the same, his dread of detection the same, and his sense of the injuries of the sufferer and the consequences of discovery are greater, for he fears to be found wicked only from the love of wickedness, without the motives of enmity or the temptations of reward. To a personal action, if brave and daring, nay, if egregiously flagitious, the wonder of mankind involuntarily attaches some degree of honour; but the gratuitous villain, who was not guilty, not because he dared, but because he feared, is deservedly heaped with the contempt and maledictions of all. To such an alternative has my fatal curiosity reduced me—an alternative aggravated by circumstances of peculiar horror to me. Whatever be the object disclosed to you, Ippolito, can it be so terrible as that which my hints have told? Do you understand me? Involuntarily I hope not, yet you should understand me, to estimate the struggles of my mind aright. A month past I would have believed my heart contaminated by the casual visitation of that thought which is now its constant inmate. I dread lest it should lose its salutary horror of which this habitual contemplation must divest it. And what shall I do? What security shall I have then? A villain in theory is half a villain in action. Habit is as strong a security for our virtues as principle; to a mind beset as mine perhaps stronger; 'tis impossible for the purest mind to dwell long on villanous and murderous thoughts, even as indifferent and neutral, without feeling their pollution not only infecting its frame, but partially influencing the actions; impulses of malignity, of mischief, of revenge. will be felt unchecked and unrepented. I feel it myself—I feel the fiend growing strong within me. What, oh!

what will become of me, Ippolito? I can hardly breathe, I can scarce hold my pen; these are the last lines it shall ever trace; you will never behold them—they will be buried with their writer. I shall not outlive this night. Filippo is weeping beside me—I cannot describe circumstances, the shock of death is too forcible for my mind. I know not what to think, or almost where I am, but I feel what I must shortly be.

"About an hour ago Filippo rushed in with horror in his face. He fell at my feet, and gasping and speechless, looked up in my face. When he could speak, it was only in broken tones and howlings of despair to tell me I was 'to die.'—'I had but a few hours to live.' I listened with the incredulity of amazement. The mind cannot readily admit the thought of death—of death so near and so sudden. At length his agony excited my fear. I then spoke unheeded in my turn, for he was unable to hear or almost to speak. With difficulty and many interruptions, at last, he told me—he had of late observed my father and his confessor often engaged in conferences, from which he was excluded—that his suspicions were awakened, as hitherto he had been a principal agent in their consultations—that this evening, owing to my father's abstraction, he had succeeded in concealing himself in a part of the room as the confessor entered. It was a dangerous experiment, but he felt such a peculiar boding sensation on his entrance that he could not resist making it.

"'They conversed in whispers at first,' said he, 'and with such long intervals, that I could collect nothing. At length the count, as if many things had been proposed, and none had satisfied him, throwing himself back in his chair, said aloud, 'I know not how to dispose of this encumbrance.'—'An encumbrance,' said the monk, 'is only another name for something we want resolution to be freed from.'—'I do not want resolution,' said the count, 'but I know not what means to employ.'—'He who does not want resolution, could not hesitate to employ any means,' observed the confessor. 'But my own son, father,' said the count. 'His crime is therefore aggravated by disobedience,' said the monk. 'But in my own castle,' said the count. 'You can therefore be more secret and secure,' replied the monk. 'But another—another—another,' said the count in a piteous tone, and as if unable to force himself to finish the sentence. 'Another is rendered necessary by those that have preceded; the first movement is voluntary, all that follow are consequential and inevitable,' urged the tempter. 'By my soul,' said the count, apparently answering his own thoughts, 'I am neither safe nor secret within these walls, witness——' He stopped. 'Our success depends as much on the choice as on the use of means,' said the monk. 'When we employ violent passions as our agents, their explosion will often extend to ourselves; but there are still and unsuspected means.'—'Do you know of such means, holy father?' interrupted the count. 'I do,' said the monk. 'And are you acquainted with one who would apply them?' asked your father, in a lower tone. 'I am,' said the confessor. There was then a long silence; the children of Satan appeared to understand each other without speech. I could have rushed out, and pierced their false hearts with my own hand.

"'The count seemed to force himself to break the silence, and said, in a hurried manner 'Good father, it is needless to observe to you, that this must be done so—so as neither to excite suspicion nor disturbance. You have of course witnessed many proofs of the efficacy and expedition of what you propose.'—'I heard many proofs,' said the monk evasively. 'But, continued your father, with increased eagerness of tone and gesture, though almost whispering, 'they are such as leave you in no doubt of its certainty.'—'Would you have me doubt my senses?' said the monk, impatiently. 'Pardon me, father,' said the count, 'you did not mention anything of seeing a proof of its operation.'—'But is not hearing one of the senses?' said the confessor, recollecting himself. It struck me, signor, when I heard them conferring thus, that leagued as they both were in wickedness, each of them felt a wish to be possessed of some knowledge of the other's previous iniquity, that might supply an influence over him at some future period. To such a motive I attributed your father's anxiety to draw an ocular confession of the power of these means (which I suppose to be poison) from the monk; for though the guilt of either could scarce be developed without implicating that of the other, yet the fears of wickedness are perpetually impelling to provisional caution, and security for the subordination of its associates. The monk rose to depart. 'You must not go in anger, father,' said the count. 'Pardon me, I mean to set about it in cold blood,' said the monk, in a peculiar accent. 'Go then, but send my attendants to me quickly—quickly, father, and

throw open all the doors as you go, that I may hear the sound of your steps till I see them approaching. I cannot be alone a moment—I am a miserable man!' This last direction was fortunate for me, for I glided out from behind the hangings through the open door, and reached your apartment in a moment.'

"Having told his tale, he again fell at my feet and wept. It had been more merciful to have let me die without this intelligence, for die I must. The poison will probably be conveyed in food, undistinguished by any peculiar taste; its operation will probably be like the approach of sleep; I should not have tasted the bitterness of death—the interval of expectation and agony. He has suggested a thousand plans for escape or resistance; they are wild; it is not a single enemy or a single emergency I have to contend against; they have me utterly in their power—these walls must bound my struggles. If I resisted violence, they might leave me to perish by famine; this is horrible. Oh, for a single weapon to grasp in mine hour of need! There is none; death comes on like the night, shutting up all creation in darkness, hopeless and impenetrable.——I have driven Filippo from me—driven him almost by force; his clamours disturbed me. I would think if I could; my mind is wondrous heavy and beclouded. I am stunned and blasted by this stroke. Death, death—what is death? Men talk of it all their lives; and the wise will talk well and smoothly of it; but who hath understood it? Who has seen it approach so near, and measured it with their full power of vision, described and embodied its just dimensions, and said to it—Now I know all thou canst be, or bring to me? No, it is impossible; if speech could be obtained in the last agonies, we might know something of it; if they could even make signs to signify the gradual obscuration of sense, and exclusion of the world and its objects; if they could intimate at what moment they let go their hold of the life of sense, and feel the dawn of their new perceptions. No, I was born to die—I have seen many that died; yet I know nothing of death. Great and invisible Being, whose name is to be uttered by silence, where am I going? all conjectures of reason, all illuminations of faith, fail me now. I could talk of these things like others, and believed my notions of them clear and authentic; but now all around me is tenfold darkness. A mountain rises between the regions of life and futurity; through it or above it, no power can obtain for living man a glimpse or a passage; clouds are seated on its top, and its centre is mantled over by darkness. I sit at its feet, and look upward in vain; I tremble in ignorance, I gasp in expectancy. Whither am I going, or to whom! How many fears of flesh are compassing me round! How much am I a mortal even at this solemn hour! The dread of pain, though it is the last I shall suffer, the throbbings of curiosity, though I shall never be sensible of their gratification, are, I think, more strong within me than all other feelings. The mode and circumstance of death are more terrible to me than the act itself; of that I have no conception; but of the possible pain and agony of the struggle, I have too, too clear an idea. Will it first affect my intellect or my senses? Shall I feel my mind obscured and declining, or mine eyes growing dim, my pulses fluttering, my hearing mixed and dizzy? Oh, what will be the first symptoms that the pilgrim is setting out on her journey—the first faint beat of the march that calls the coward to the last great conflict! and when I try to 'go forth and shake myself, as at other times,' to scatter these faint assaults of infirmity; to feel, to know that no power can arrest or subdue them; that, feeble as they seem, they are the beginnings of that wondrous process that in a few moments will change my body into dust, and shut out my spirit, to wander in a state new and unknown, of which the conception can only commence with the existence?

"I will wrap up my head and think no more—it will not be. Shall I suffer much pain? Will my struggles be long? How do we know but the approach of death is pleasurable? None have returned to tell us; perhaps our fears are all that invest it with pain. Oh, no, no, the aspect of the dead bears no expression of pleasure! the pointed nostril, the grim and rigid mouth, the distended and bursting eye, the hair bristling and erect, like resistance—these are not the features of one who is at ease. No; death is every way horrible. I have heard, too, that the young, and those in health, are more susceptible of severe pain, and longer struggles, than the weak and aged. They cling to life with terrible force, and repeated blows and hard butchering violence must rend them asunder. Yes, death is every way horrible to me! Almighty Powers, can this be possible? Have two hours elapsed since I was told I must die? It appears that I have heard it but now. Oh, who can think life long who knows he must

die? Who can slumber over the hours whose lapse leads to futurity? How fast—how fast, even to the eye, the hand of this time-piece travels! Even while I write it changes its place! If it were arrested for an hour, what injury would the world sustain for an hour? It might stop for a day—for a year, without mankind being sensible of it; and, if it should, its termination would only find me, as now, lapt in terrible conjecture! To prepare for what is indefinite, no time would be sufficient; all around me is wondrous, as if I had but just begun to live. This little instrument—can its minute workings lead to an effect so stupendous? Can the progress of that small line precipitate an immortal spirit into futurity? I have heard of the current of the stream before, but now my eyes see it, I have felt its force, and measured its rapidity; nothing may turn it back, or withstand it. A few moments more, and—— was that a step? It was a step—I hear it—they come! I must die! Gracious Heaven! is there no help—no respite? Oh, for the swords that are playing by the sides of the idlers of the world this moment! Oh, that I were in a forest, and could rend the branches from the trees for my defence! Can I not tear out the beams or stones of these giant walls to cast at them? By Heaven, I will not hold out my throat to them! I will fight for life, and that terribly—I will make a weapon of something, or they shall feel that the naked hand of despair can scatter firebrands, and arrows, and death!"

Here the manuscript ended, and Cyprian, when he had finished it, looked with wonder at Annibal, to behold him yet alive. Its termination had indicated death, aggravated by hopeless resistance. Annibal pursued the narrative verbally.

"I wrote those last lines with many intervals of fear and of meditation. It was long after midnight that I heard a step approaching. After a struggle, which neither my power nor voice can describe, I started up, and stood fixed opposite the entrance; my only instrument was a massive chair, which, in my frantic strength, I wielded like a wand. I am convinced I would have crushed to death the being against whom I lifted it. The step came nearer, I set my teeth close, and rose on my feet, and my sinews felt like iron. The door was unlocked, and, before I could raise my arm, Filippo rushed in. There was no time for inquiry or explanation; he was gasping for breath, and only beckoned me to follow; that motion calmed me in a moment; I seemed to understand, intuitively, it was a sign of safety and freedom.

"I caught up the lamp, and followed him. On quitting the room, I was about to turn down the passage, but he grasped my arm, and though still unable to utter more than interjections, gave me to understand we must take another direction. He passed before, with quick but steady steps. I held the lamp low lest our speed would extinguish it, for the passage into which we had entered appeared longer and loftier than the other, and the air, though damp and still, was strong in its current. I was amazed at the apparent incaution of Filippo's movements, for he walked as he would at noon-day; but at the end of the passage he suddenly stopped, and taking the lamp from me, and shrouding it with his cloak, stepped forward with breathless and shivering slowness, motioning me to do so likewise. I did so; but in the room we entered, I could discover no reason for this sudden caution: it was spacious and desolate, and, as the half-veiled light threw a partial and thwarting gleam upon it, I could only see masses of dusky obscurity. As we drew near the opposite door, Filippo contracted his steps with increasing fear, and I now threw round me a glance of serious inquiry. I discovered then, with difficulty, a dark heap in the corner we were approaching; it was too dim and shapeless to suggest any cause for the caution he betrayed, yet his eye, as he drew nearer it, rolled in horror, and his steps almost faltered. I leant over him, to view it more closely, and in that moment I thought I beheld it move. Filippo murmured something between a groan and an exclamation of affright, and darted forward so quickly, that I found myself alone and in darkness, almost before I perceived he was gone. I followed him, but know not why I shuddered as I passed that strange dark heap. Just as I reached the door, it moved again; I heard it distinctly rustle in the darkness. I sprung past it with the quickness of real fear. My perceptions were entirely changed; but a moment past, and I dreaded nothing but the terrible monk and his poison; but the sudden and causeless appearance of Filippo, the dim light that led me, this still and fantastic gliding through passages of unbreathing desolation, and the last strange object I had beheld, combined with the confusion and horror of my recent feelings, had rendered me as susceptible of momentary and local impressions as if I had no other, no personal concern—as if I was not flying for life—for life hardly held and hourly threatened.

Still under the influence of what I imagined I beheld, I eagerly questioned Filippo, whom I had now overtaken, and who had renewed his swiftness.—'That chamber,' said he, incoherently; 'ask not—hurry on; your life depends on a moment—he is quiet.'

"I obeyed him in silence. We crossed other chambers and wound through other passages I had never beheld before, or knew this vast fabric contained; but as I passed I could not help glancing a thought of horror upon the numberless victims of the guilt or cruelty of its former possessors, so far from the knowledge or sympathy of their fellow creatures, though under the same roof and within the same walls, that it was perhaps unknown to their nearest relatives where they existed or what they suffered; that the groans they uttered might form a part of the respiration of a friend or a brother, without conveying to them that the lips from which they issued were so near. We now appeared to have traversed that wing of the castle; we had entered a large hall whose doors had a loftier moulding than any we had passed, and which seemed, from the bolder and simpler character of its structure, to be near the extremity of the building, and probably to communicate with the court of the castle.

"Here Filippo paused, and uncovering the lamp, began eagerly to examine the doors; at several he shook his head with the impatience of disappointment. I followed him mechanically; at length he darted towards one that lay deep in the shade, and vehemently applied to it a key, which he snatched from his bosom. By the delay and the imperfect sound that followed the application, I knew its success too well—the sound struck upon my heart. Filippo, the next moment, withdrew the key and disappeared down a dark arch, which I had not seen before, bearing the lamp with him. I remained in utter darkness. My mind had been weakened by trials and sufferings both real and fantastic. The moment he was gone I became the victim of visionary terror; I recollected his sudden appearance, almost impossible to be effected by human means, his strange swiftness and silence, his look, so wild and unnatural, his few words, so ominous, his disappearance without noise or preparation; I recollected the strange warnings given to those who were near their dissolution by those who had already undergone it—I recollected how probable it was; Filippo had exposed himself to danger, even mortal, by his zeal for me—I recollected with horror the mysterious heap in that dark chamber, at which he seemed to pause with portentous shudderings; its dimensions and shape were like those of a corse. I felt it impossible to nurse these horrible imaginings long; they were invading my last half-rallied remains of reason; there was a more probable cause for his desertion: but my habitual reliance on him long resisted that.

"I looked around me to see if any hope remained from my own exertions; the clouds of a heavy night appearing at the high and pillared windows excluded every gleam of light, and prevented me from conjecturing even in what part of the building I was.

"As I gazed around a faint noise came to my ear. I listened—it was the mixed sound of a voice that whispered and steps that hesitated. I stood motionless betwixt hope and fear. —'Hush,' said a voice at some distance. Willing to believe it Filippo's, I answered in the same accent.—'Is it you?' said the voice more articulately; 'I have been in search of you.' As the last words were uttered, I perceived the voice to be that of my father.

"I neither exclaimed nor moved—I was stiffened and speechless; to have felt a stiletto in my breast had been almost a relief at that moment. The steps drew nearer; the blood which appeared to have deserted my frame now rushed back with a sudden and feverish glow; strange and accursed thoughts were with me. We were in the dark; I remembered the visitation of the spectre monk; I remembered words never heard by man but me—never to be heard. My eyes grew dim—a blaze of purple light quivered through the hall, yet I could see nothing by its glare. My limbs tottered under me, but the influence whose terror would have betrayed me abated. The steps were evidently receding; and as they retired I thought I heard curses hissing along the walls. I remained gasping for breath. The air of the hall grew cool again, and though the darkness was not diminished, its shades I thought were less dense and oppressive.

"On a sudden I felt myself grasped with violence. I struggled to free myself. I heard the voice of Filippo. I believed him treacherous, and all the mystery was solved.—'Wretch,' said I, grasping him in my turn, 'you have betrayed me.'—'What madness is this?' he whispered in low but vehement tones; 'for the holy Virgin's sake, follow me, but speak not.' —'You lead me to death,' said I; yet I followed him without resistance.

"I now found we were in complete darkness. After descending a few steps, we stopped. I was urgent in my whispered inquiries, but obtained no answer. I became impatient of fear and expectation, and almost remonstrated aloud, when I heard a noise near me like the opening of a door, and, in the next moment, Filippo led me into the court of the castle.

"It was the air, the free open air, the blessed air of heaven. I breathed it in freedom; it was no dream of transitory freedom. I opened my bosom to it; I extended my arms, as if it were tangible and material. I was delirious with sudden and uncontrollable joy.

"When my senses returned, I found we were in a ruinous enclosure, surrounded by buildings I had not remembered to have seen before; but which, from their appearance, I judged to belong to the servants of the castle. In one or two of the turrets that were grotesquely perched here and there on the blank and giant walls, I still saw two lights twinkling. Filippo, stooping to the ground, raised up the lamp, which he had dexterously hid behind the fragment of a fallen battlement; and we crossed the court in silence, with steps often obstructed by the ruins that were scattered over it. We glided through other arches, whose darkness was partially broken by our half-hid light, and at length reached a low door which opened on the rampart. Here still greater caution was necessary. This had been long in a ruinous state; our steps were confined to a narrow ledge of rocky path, and our only hold of support was the projections and weedy tufts of the dismantled wall.

"At length the glare of the lamp flashed upward on a rude and ruined arch, which appeared once to have been connected with the remains of a drawbridge. We crept under it, and, clinging to its rugged and indented sides, which the bickering gleams of the lamp carved into fantastic shapings, descended to the moat, which the fragments that had fallen from above had almost filled up beneath the arch. We crossed it, descended the mound, and reached the wood in safety.

"I now heaped thanks, inquiries, and applauses, in the same breath, on Filippo, who was too busy crossing himself and praying to his patron to heed me.

"At length, as we lay behind a tuft of chesnut trees (for he would not permit us as yet to proceed), I procured from him the intelligence of the means.

"'When you drove me from you, signor,' said he, 'and seemed determined to die, I left you with a resolution to do something desperate. I was resolved you should not perish unaided. This was necessary for my own safety as well as yours. I could not imagine they would spare me, who was permitted to live only as a means to betray you, when it was no longer necessary to employ that means. I went back to the count's apartment; I found him preparing to quit it in order to join the family in the hall, where they usually sup.

"'I could not observe any change either in his looks or his language. He suffered my attendance as usual, without notice. I followed to the hall, and mixed with the other domesties. On this night I observed the confessor had joined the family. Through the air of deep abstraction he always wears it was impossible to discover his thoughts, or whether the frame of his mind was habitual or peculiar.

"'As he approached where the family were not yet seated, I observed him bring forward, as usual, a small vial of lemon juice, which he mixes with water, and which constitutes his only beverage, and place it beside his cover. I was near him. The motion of his arm showed me another small vial in his vest. I grew deadly sick as I beheld it. I had no doubt I saw the instrument of your death. As he turned round, he displaced his girdle and rosary. He observed it, and began to adjust them. In order to do so, he found it necessary to place the other vial on the table, to which his back was turned. This was the critical moment. The vial of lemon-juice was on the right; the other on the left. With the quickness and silence of thought I changed their places. He turned round, put up the first vial into his vest, and emptied the latter into a glass of water that stood beside his cover.

"'When I had done this, I reflected that I had only gained time; that it must be soon discovered that the monk was poisoned, and that you had only swallowed lemon-juice. If, therefore, I could not devise some means of escape in the interval which I had gained, I felt it was unavailing, except so far as to punish an intentional murderer; but the success and promptitude of my first movement suggested a flattering omen, which I accepted not unreadily.

"'In the meantime the family assembled. The count and his confessor whispered often.

With unspeakable delight I saw the latter employ the vase that stood beside him. Towards the conclusion of the meal, the count desiring the chamberlain to be summoned, spoke some words to him in a low voice, on which the latter detached a rusty key from his girdle and gave it to the confessor, who lodged it in his vest. I understood every motion. It seemed that, for some reason (probably that of concealing the corpse), the monk had found it necessary to procure the key from the chamberlain. I had glanced on the size and shape of the key, and though it was nothing remarkable, I guessed from the former, and from the apparent intention with which it was procured, that it belonged to some external door of the castle, to which, if we could procure access, our safety was assured. I therefore resolved to watch the monk silently. I concluded, from the conversation that I repeated to you, that the poison was of a rapid and quiet operation. I doubted not that the monk would soon feel its effects, and if I could be near him at the moment and secure the keys, all was well.

"'The family now separated. The monk retired. I watched him at a cautious distance, and saw him enter his apartment: to that terrible apartment, even at noonday, I know not what force could have compelled me; but now, at night, alone and in darkness, save the dim and solitary lamp that burned in the passage, I knelt at the door and watched every sound within. It was now past midnight, when I heard him advancing abruptly to the door as if a sudden thought had smote him. I retired with speed. He came out. I saw him first bend forward from the door, and, holding his lamp high, look far into the passage. Not a sound breathed along it. He advanced, and I thought I heard him sigh. He then went rapidly forward, so rapidly that I was alone in the passage. His steps, however, were a sufficient direction for me in the deep stillness of the night. He took a direction to your apartment. Every moment now I expected to see him falter or to hear him groan as I glided after him on tiptoe, led by the taper that streamed distantly on the darkness.

"'He proceeded, however, without hesitation, till he entered a large hall, not immediately near your apartment. It was empty, and far from any inhabited part of the castle. I almost shuddered to follow him so far; but the thought of you inspired me. I paused in the passage which led to the hall. When he entered it, I heard him groan audibly. He stood a few moments in the centre of the room, and then advancing to a picture at the opposite end, held his taper close to it. He gazed long; and, as he turned away, the light fell full on his countenance. I had never beheld it before so singularly impressed. There was a look of human agony in it I never before had seen or believed him capable of feeling. He then laid the taper down on a marble slab, and sat down, with his arms folded, beside it.

"'I eyed him intently. There was neither change in his countenance nor weakness in his motions. I grew sick with fear. He was not like a man that had swallowed poison. I doubted, and I trembled. I recollected all I had heard of him, and some things I had seen. I condemned my own temerity in supposing him assailable by the modes of human destruction. He was evidently incapable of being injured by them; and if he were not, what must befall me?

"'While these thoughts beset me, I will confess to you I was only withheld from flying away and relinquishing the whole in despair by the thought that if he were indeed a being not of this world, all distance of space would be ineffectual to protect me from him. While I yet debated and trembled, he rose suddenly, as if from an impulse of pain. I leaned forward, breathless with fresh hope. At that distance, I could not observe any change in his features; but, as I gazed, methought a yellower tinge mixed with the paleness of his visage. In the next moment all doubt was removed. He gasped, he shivered, and he fell.

"'I now came forward with confidence. I approached him. His eyes were glazed and reverted; he was evidently in the agonies of death. I did not wait for the mere decencies of humanity; I searched his vest; I found the keys. I hastened back to your apartment, unable to speak or to explain. I hurried you to the hall where the corse lay; for I knew, by his passing there, it must be in the direction of some outward passage or door. I followed the track, partly from conjecture and partly from memory; for I had traversed that part of the castle before, and succeeded in my pursuit.

"'And now, signor, adieu to dungeons, and poison, and monks. We are safe on the outside of these grim walls; and if ever we enter them again, St Filippo will have a good right to disregard our prayers for deliverance.

"Such was Filippo's narrative, to which I listened with wonder and thankfulness. I readily admitted the interposition of Divine Power for our safety; yet it was not without horror that I thought of the monk and his sudden and terrible fate. A degree of involuntary incredulity mixed and still mixes itself with my feelings on that subject. He appears to me a being above the vicissitudes of humanity; a being who does not, in a mortal sense, exist, and who therefore cannot, in a mortal sense, perish.

"The impression received in the chamber of my confinement at Muralto nothing has yet effaced. I mentioned to Filippo the voice I had heard in the hall when he left me so abruptly. This he ascribed to fancy, and perhaps that was its only cause. His own hasty departure was owing to the sudden recollection of a door in an adjacent passage, which he wished to attempt without agitating me by probable disappointment.

"I now inquired why we did not proceed, and was told that the man who brought ice to the castle, and who travelled at night to avoid the heat, was probably on the way which we were to take, and that it were better to avoid being seen till we reached Naples.

"While we lingered in the wood, I raised my eyes, not without awe, to the castle, whose huge and massive blackness strongly charactered itself, even amid the gloom of night and the dusky confusion of the forest and mountains. Far to the left I saw the ruined chapel, that spot which awoke so many terrible recollections. It stood in shapeless darkness. As I gazed on it, I almost expected to see that mysterious light wandering along its walls, and gleaming on the dark tufts of wood and shrubs that invest it. As I still looked in vague expectation, a light indeed appeared, which I watched not without emotion, but discovered it to be but a star (the only one that twinkled through the darkness of the night), just appearing beneath the arch of the shattered window.

"At this moment steps passed near us, which Filippo affirmed to be those of the person we waited for; and we pursued another direction with our utmost expedition. When we had penetrated about a mile into the forest, a bell from the castle sounded in the air above; and on turning, I saw distinctly a light, that, pale at first, as if seen through a casement, grew suddenly brighter, and poured a broad glare on the darkness of the upper wood. I believed this to be only an indication that the person who had passed us was admitted by some one at the castle, from whose taper proceeded the light we had beheld; but Filippo, under more serious apprehensions of pursuit, persuaded me to hide in an intricate part of the forest, as it was impossible we could reach Naples before our pursuers would overtake us. Subdued, but not convinced, I consented to conceal myself in a pit, the mouth of which was mantled over with tangled and briery shrubs. The event was only a day wasted in watching, solicitude, and famine. No step passed near us; no sound or signal of pursuit was heard in the forest. Towards evening we quitted our retreat, and reached Naples in safety, which, since I perceive there is no immediate persecution excited against me, I shall quit with some hope of safety.

"I distrust this calm, however; it is unnatural; but while it continues I may take advantage of its influence to escape from danger that is only meditated and distant. I shall leave Naples to-morrow."—"Do you, then, hold your intention of going to France?"—"I do; but first I shall go to Capua. There is an uncle of my mother's, a wealthy ecclesiastic, from whom I expect assistance and protection, as he has long been on terms of enmity with my father. The present contents of my purse would scarce convey me to France; and it is necessary for an adventurer to conciliate credit by his appearance, as my peculiar circumstances exclude other recommendation. Poor Ippolito! would he were with me! but the tumult of my own feelings and situation has not allowed me to waste much sympathy on him. When you write, Cyprian, tell of my unhappy circumstances; but do not mention my disappointment on discovering his absence, for that would only aggravate his own."—"And the inquiry, begun and terminated under circumstances so extraordinary, do you intend to pursue it no more?" said Cyprian, timidly. "Name it not; the sound is hateful and terrible to me. I abjure the idea of spectres, mysteries, and disclosures. I will fly from ruins and the gloom of antiquity as I would from the mouth of hell, if it yawned at my feet. I will choose the airiest structures for my abode, the lightest topics for my conversation. My companions shall be those whom levity can easily procure, and folly can amuse. The being who indulges in the dreams of vision, and courts, whether with intentions pure or foul, the communion of the forbidden world, makes himself a mark for the imposition of mankind and the malignity of infernal ones. He is a

and willing subject for the machinations of hell; he is given over to them by the power he has offended by seeking them. I am convinced that Satan is permitted a greater latitude of temptation, and fierceness, and frequency of assault, on such a being. The pursuit must tend to subvert his reason and deprave his heart. No, no; whatever I have witnessed, or been engaged in, whether it be true or false, whether it be solemn or futile, I here renounce it. Let them find another agent for their purposes of horror; let them harden by familiarity of temptation, and assimilate to their own demonnatures, by frequency of communication, the alien and apostate soul that seeks their secrets or their presence. I shall heal and soothe my distempered mind by images of softness and beauty; by the agencies of humanity, and the enjoyments of nature and life."

As he spake, he drew forth the picture he always bore in his bosom, kissed it, and gazed on it with complacency. Cyprian, who saw it too, with strong emotion, begged to look on it more intently; and while he held it in his hand his tears streamed fast upon it.

"Do you know that picture then?" said Annibal in amaze. "How is it possible you should know it?"—"Ask me not; it is impossible I should tell. Yes, I know it too well."—"What mystery hangs over this picture? All that see it seem to know it; yet none will communicate their knowledge."—"There is a mystery, and it is inscrutable."—"Does the original of this picture then live? Do you know her? Tell me but her name; I will not ask by what means you obtained the knowledge of her, nor will I endeavour to solve the mystery of resemblance between one so long dead and one who lives; of resemblance without possibility of connexion."—"The original of this picture lives, but not to you. If you love her, seek not to disturb her quiet, or your own, by a search of which the success is hopeless. She never can be yours."—"This is beyond all comprehension; the influence pursues me still; my whole life is to be overshadowed by mystery."

After a night of fruitless inquiry and exclamation, Annibal took leave of Cyprian; and accompanied by Filippo, set out for Capua.

VOLUME III.

CHAPTER I.

"These men, or are they men, or are they devils,
With whom I met at night?—they've fasten'd on me
Fell thoughts which, though I spurn them,
Haunt me still."—Miss Baillie's Rayner.

In the meantime Ippolito, without any object but that of flying what was inevitable, had quitted Naples with a single attendant, and no other preparation for a journey than an utter indifference to its vicissitudes or hardships. On the first evening, without having pursued consciously any direction, he found himself on the banks of the lake of Celano. It was now the close of autumn, and as the wind swept over the dim waters of the lake, and the mists moved in fantastic wreaths over the remote and rocky shores, sometimes giving the forms of ancient structure to the cliffs and headlands, and sometimes shapings still wilder to the scattered fishermen's huts and villas on their points, Ippolito mechanically looked around for some place to which he might retire for the night, without the hope of repose.

"These winding roads," said the attendant, "signor, are so wild and lonely; the nearest town to which we can resort is that of Celano, a good mile further." Ippolito, too weary of spirit to communicate with his servant, silently took the direction pointed out to him towards the town of Celano, which they reached at the close of evening.

"They entered a wretched inn, to the many defects and inconveniences of which Ippolito was insensible, since he procured in it the only luxury he could enjoy, a solitary chamber, against the very casement of which the waves of the lake were beating.

"Here, for the first time, he thought on what direction he would pursue. Many were suggested and many rejected, till Ippolito, wondering at his own fastidiousness, began to examine into its reasons, and discovered, with a sensation nearly amounting to horror, that there was spread over his mind a mass of invisible and universal persecution, which impelled

his thoughts in their flight from place to place with the same velocity that its actual influence would have chased his steps. When this conviction struck him, in unutterable anguish he started from his chair, and paused for a moment between the impulse of fright and the torpor of despair. That this influence should have attained this absolute dominion in his mind, and asserted that dominion in the very moment when the change of place had flattered him with partial victory, was not to be borne. His distraction almost applied to the stupendous frame of the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" Of the latter clause he felt the truth too forcibly—"If I go down to hell, thou art there also." As he stalked about the room, some persons in the next spoke so loudly that he was compelled to hear them without any effort of attention. As he listened to the voices, he recollected the speakers were a party of vinedressers and labourers, who were returning to their native territory, the Abruzzo, from the neighbourhood of Naples, whither they had been allured during the summer by the hope of higher wages. They were now drinking in the adjacent room with the landlord. "It is a strange business," said one, addressing the host, whose name was Borio, "nor do I like speaking of it much. I never liked to have Satan's name often in my mouth, for, Christo benedetto, one is se apt to think of him when one is alone. When I have to cross the mountain near our village by night, or to watch the grapes in the hut alone, I never listen to stories such as those in the day, I always fill my mind with store of good hymns, but when there is a good number of us together as we are now, I feel that I have as much courage as another. And so, comrades, as I was saying, they talked of nothing else all over Naples. Some said that the cavalier had devoted himself, body and soul, to Satan, and that he met him every night in some place under ground, where no one could discover; that his servants never could trace him further than the portico of the palace, and that some who attempted to follow him were all invested in a glare of blue fire, and their torches were dashed out of their hands by a hoof of red-hot iron. Others said that it was not the young cavalier's fault, but his great grandfather's, who had sold all his posterity to the old serpent for a great heap of treasure he gave him, but that the purchase was not to be claimed till this generation, and that it was forfeit at the time of the last carnival, when the fiend appeared to the unfortunate youth habited like a minstrel, and playing on a harp, whose strings were the guts of necromancers, 'Your time is come, you must away;' and that all the grove where he glided along has been blasted and bare ever since."

"Now, by what I have heard," said the host, "the fiend has more christian bowels, and uses the cavalier like a man of honour, for I hear he has given him permission to wander over Italy for a year and a day, and if he can get a priest to give him absolution, he quits his claim on him for ever."—"Ha, ha," exclaimed another, in a tone of superior wisdom, "do you, friend, take the devil to be such a fool? No, no; rely on it, if he quits him on the simple score of witchcraft, he will stick his claws fast in him on an action of bond and compact. It is marvellous, neighbours, how simple ye are; why, it is just in the world below us as it is here; witchcraft is like contracting a debt, but a compact is like a bond; if once Satan is able to produce it in open court against the defendant, the inquisition itself must acknowledge it; nay," exalting his voice with his argument, "his Holiness the Pope himself must sign as a competent witness."

All seemed struck by the force of this argument, and a pause of general meditation ensued, till one of the party, whose voice was that of an old man, said, with an apparent diffidence of his own sentiments, "Now, were I to give an opinion, it would be that the cavalier was neither devoted to Satan by himself nor his ancestors. Ah, neighbours, did you see what a goodly and noble youth he is to look at, ye never could believe he dealt with anything evil; no, no, as long as I remember, or as long as my father could remember, the Montorio were a great, proud, wicked family; they did deeds of mischief enough among themselves without the aid of Satan; they were always threatened with discoveries, and dying assassins employed by them confessed terrible things, it was said. Now, perhaps something of this kind is about to be disclosed, and the cavalier's noble heart is breaking to think on it, and he cannot bear to stay in Naples any longer, to witness the ruin of his family."

At this mild construction of Ippolito's flight, every one uttered a murmur of disapprobation. The love of the marvellous is too jealous for its gratifications, and too irritable for its credit, to yield to incredulity so easily; and the former speaker, elated by his success, was

anxious to preserve the popularity it had acquired him. "Old man," said he, "you are much mistaken. If the cavalier be permitted to traverse Italy, rely upon it 'tis for the purpose of bringing others to his master's service, in order to escape better himself; for that is the way Satan deludes those poor wretches. He promises reward and honour to those who are zealous in his service, and when they have seduced souls without number, and finally lost their own, then he rewards them after his own manner, which any one knows that has once seen the great picture near the shrine of St Antonio, at the church del Miroli, near Naples. There all the degrees and kinds of punishment that ever were invented are exercising upon the hosts of ruined spirits; one would think the devils had been all in the inquisition, they are so clever at it; you could swear you smelt brimstone, and felt a heat like that of a furnace breathed over you from it; but only to tell you of one group in it, there are three figures——"

Here Ippolito heard the clustering sound of his hearers drawing more closely around him; his misery became suddenly intolerable, and he groaned aloud. Terrified at the sound, they all desisted to speak or to listen; and without venturing to comment on the cause of the disturbance, the last speaker said, in a voice of fear, "I believe we had better cease to speak on this subject, unless some ecclesiastic was in the house with us."—"There is a convent of Dominicans near these walls," said the host, who was anxious for the conclusion. "How near?" said the other, whose desire of exciting wonder was contending with fear. "You may hear the vesper bell from this," said the host, evasively. "But how near, friend Borio—tell me precisely how near?"—"'Tis a long mile," said the host, reluctantly. The speaker declined to finish his story on this security. "The devil's in it," said the host in his disappointment, "if the toll of that bell, and the chant of the monks at vespers, are not sufficient to frighten the devil, if he were in this room."

His companions reproved him for profaneness, and the host, to retrieve the credit of his sanctimony, said, "Whatever be the cavalier's intentions in this journey, I would not be the host to receive him for the wealth of the vatican. I warrant the smell of sulphur never would quit the room he lay in; and if I received a single coin from him, I should expect it to turn into a burning coal in my hand."—"You had better be on your guard, friend Borio," said another, in the mere wantonness of wisdom, "I hear he was seen to take this direction."—"By the holy saints, there came a cavalier to my house this evening!"

There was now a general commotion of fear, followed by a whispering consultation. Ippolito's first impulse was to quit the inn, but he recollected that would only confirm their suspicions, and perhaps make his further progress difficult. Another expedient occurred, but his proud heart long struggled with the necessity of deceit. At this moment he heard his servant passing under the window; he called him, and without specifying his reasons, desired that he would, on no account, mention his name or rank in the house, nor during any future part of the journey, which he must be in readiness to pursue as soon as possible. The man, proud of a charge that resembled an approach to confidence, readily promised to observe it: and that his fidelity might not want the merit of resisted temptation, immediately repaired to the room where the vine-dressers were seated with the host.

They had just resolved to send for him, in order to discover whether his master was the Count Montorio, and now received him with the overcharged welcome that suspicion gives to hide her own purposes. "Pray, friend," said the host, after they had drank some time, "what is the cavalier your master's name?"—"His name—his name"—said the man, who, in the determination to conceal the real, had forgot to provide himself with a fictitious one. "Ay, his name," continued the host, "I suppose you have lived with him but a short time?"—"I have lived with the signor several years," said the man, in his eagerness to prove he was not unprepared for every question, and to retrieve the ground his embarrassment had lost. "You have lived with him several years, and yet do not know his name! That is strange indeed, stranger than anything I have yet heard."—"Why, what have you heard of the signor?" said the man, glad to become the inquisitor in his turn. "I have heard he sometimes walks at night," said the other, significantly. "To be sure he does, and so do all the cavaliers in Naples," said the man, triumphantly. "Ay; but do you know where he goes?" said the host, lowering his voice. "No; nor does any one else," said the man, betraying a material part of his intelligence in his solicitude to prove that no one was wiser than himself. "You never attend him on those occasions?" pursued the host. "Santa Maria, no," said the man, shuddering.

"What would you take, and accompany him in one of his nightly wanderings?" said the host; pursuing his victory. "Not the wealth of Loretto,' said the man, who recollected the terrible stories he had heard of his master at Naples, and who had answered his own thoughts rather than the questions addressed to him. "Then it is all true," said the old man. "Holy saints! what a pity!"—"What is a pity?" said the lacky, roused from his abstraction by the exclamation. "What you have just confessed about your master," said the host. "I confess!" said the man, "I would not confess if I was torn with pincers; I confess nothing."—"Nay, it was not much either," said one of the men, a shrewd fellow, "you only acknowledged your master was one of the Montorio family."—"I will be torn in ten thousand pieces first," said the man, with increased vehemence; "you are a horrid and atrocious villain to say I acknowledge it; I never did, and never will."—"Come, come," said his wily opponent, "you need not be in a fury; perhaps I mistook you; but you must confess, that if he is not one of the family, he is remarkably like them."—"To be sure," said the man, again sacrificing his cause to his power of answering a partial objection, "to be sure; there is a strong family likeness among them all."

Here a general cry of triumph arose, which drowned even the angry exclamations of the servant; and Ippolito, distracted by the consequences of his folly, and the superstition of the rest, silently quitted the chamber, remounted his horse, and, pursuing the first track he discovered, with all the speed that darkness and weariness permitted, was many miles from Celano before the party had resolved whether to summon the Dominican brethren to their aid, or to send express to the Inquisition at Naples.

The hardships of his wanderings, rather than his journey, were lost in more painful subjects of meditation. The secret of his soul was known—that deep and eternal secret, that he believed buried in the bowels of the earth; it was known, and the tumult of his thoughts forbid the conjecture by what means it was known, or how its further diffusion might be prevented.

The only sensation that prevailed in his mind was a confusion undefined and unappeasable, that could neither trace the forms of danger, nor discover what way of flight from it was to be pursued. He trembled, though he scarce recollected what was past; he deprecated, though he knew not what was to come; he fled, without an object in flight; and he increased his speed, as the motives of fear became more and more obscure to his mind. The darkness and remoteness from human resort or notice in which the transactions at Naples had passed, had utterly excluded all suspicion that they were known, or could be known to any individual but himself; and such was the abstraction and intentness of mind with which he was engaged in them, that had such a suspicion occurred, it could not have suspended the pursuit a moment. Along with the circumstance itself all consequences, remote or obvious, were equal strangers to his mind. When, therefore, the fact itself, with all the consequences that the suspicions of ignorance and the rage of superstition could attach to it, rushed on his mind, unforeseen and unweighed, without a power of preparation or resistance, he staggered under the shock—it blasted and astounded him. For a moment visionary and remote fears were banished by substantial and imminent terrors. The anguish of terror that cannot name its object, and of guilt that cannot ascertain its danger, gathered over his mind. A sensation of rare and excruciating influence; the sensation of all our measures being anticipated; our progress measured and ruined; the exact reach of our boundary calculated and shadowed out; the inmost recesses of our mind violated and laid waste; and Omniscience engaged on the side of our enemies to destroy us, overcame him. No murderer, at whose feet a sudden whirlwind would dash the witness of his guilt before unsuspecting thousands; no traveller, at whose naked breast the lightnings are aiming, before a cloud has been seen to gather in the heaven, ever gazed around them, so transfixed and appalled.

His immediate impulse was flight. He urged his horse to his utmost speed, and still all speed sunk under the velocity of his thoughts. His mind was rather irritated than appeased by the tumult of motion. An imaginary line seemed to run beside him, which he could neither measure nor outrun. His speed left nothing but space behind, and his progress seemed nothing but an approach to mischief.

Towards morning he found himself in a part of the country whose wildness and savageness insensibly poured quiet and confidence on his mind. It was man he dreaded; and here there

was no trace of man. Rocks and waters, whose wreathed and fantastic undulations almost resembled the clouds that hovered round them, melting their hues and shapes into their own unsubstantial forms of misty lightness, presented a range of scenery more meet for the haunt of an aerial genius than a mortal inhabitant.

Far to the left, as the fuller tints of morning deepened and defined the shadowy characters of the mountain landscape, Ippolito descried a dim cluster of cottages, perched in the hollow of two hills, whose antic and spiry pinnacles seemed to have been cleft for its reception; the opposite features of its wild and sheltered situation presenting a contrast that divided the feelings between awe and pleasure. To the inhabitants of a place so sequestered Ippolito believed he might safely apply for food and refuge.

Thither, therefore, he directed his course, and found that whatever wonder he excited was occasioned by the appearance of a stranger in so remote a region. Here he reposed for some days, like a bird that, chased and wounded, regains her nest amongst inaccessible rocks, and spreads her torn plumage to the winds of freedom. He was excited to personal exertion to render existence tolerable. Here were no artificial resources, no expedients to disguise the waste of time, and renew the spirit of enjoyment. He was impelled to vigorous bodily exercise; at first to exhaust the throbbings of inward pain, and afterwards to gratify a newly-acquired sense of pleasure. An extraordinary vigour of frame, which the voluptuous indolence of Naples had enervated, was renewed by his mountain habits; and the change was in some time extended to his mind. He was at first soothed by the dash of the cataract, the hum of the winds in the mountain caverns, the masses of rock, bold, abrupt, and detached, that often stemmed the port of some ancient Gothic structure; their marked and storied ascents and towery summits shaping out the fantastic forms of its architecture; and the beams of the setting sun, reflected from a surface, resplendent with hues of verdure and stains of marble, aptly portraying the illumined windows, glorious with the colours of blazonry.

By these he was at first soothed and weaned from painful remembrance, but in a short time he visited them with positive pleasure, not for the sake of what they took away, but of what they gave.

It is impossible for a mind not conscious of great crimes to be conversant with nature without feeling her balmy and potent influence. The quiet magic of loneliness, the deep calm of unbreathing things, the gentle agitations of inanimate motion, poured themselves into the very recesses of his soul, and healed them.

At first, when he rushed into these solitudes, he mentally resolved to devote himself to the contemplation of his situation, and of some bold, gigantic effort, by which he resolved to free himself from his thraldom; but as weariness and distraction were the only result of his deliberation, he suffered it gradually to steal from his mind, and balanced between the reproaches of indolence and the refreshments of tranquillity.

He was amused in his solitude by some papers of Cyprian's, which, in the hurry of his departure from Naples, he had unintentionally taken along with him. They related to that mysterious story which he had left unfinished. Ippolito had almost forgot that the object of it had been attached to him. The other extraordinary circumstances of the narrative, strange and remote as they were, Cyprian's enthusiasm had thrown a shade of incredulity over, and Ippolito read it as a representation of events that had never existed.

In the papers he now read the author's mind appeared weary of the ordinary modes of language and progress of narrative. She had selected different periods as eras in her melancholy history, and written a few lines on each in the language of poetry.

They were monotonously melancholy. It was a passion apparently unbroken by an interval of tranquillity, unillumined by a single ray of hope. She had loved as none had ever loved, and suffered as few had suffered. Nor would Ippolito have understood the reason or possibility of such despair, had he not recollected to have heard from Cyprian that the unfortunate female had been a nun, that she had not seen the object that fascinated her till she was under irrevocable engagements, and that though her "love, stronger than death," had survived in these posthumous lamentations, it had not the power to make her transgress the barrier of religion by a disclosure of it while she lived. The first appeared to have been written when passion had lingered long enough to know it was hopeless—when the first clouds of melancholy began

to gather over her feelings; it was written on a second accidental view of the object of her affections.

Once more I caught thy form—'twas but a moment—
A moment! passion lives an age in moments.
Feeling can trace the boundless range of being,
Each maze of fancy, each abyss of thought.
Joy's rose-twined bowers and memory's pictured cells
Recall the past, anticipate the future,
Exhaust all forms of life and dreams of vision
Within a moment's lapse.
So Mecca's seer, as the wild legend tells,
On the supernal wing of vision soared;
Explored the star-strewn paths of Paradise,
Drank the rich gale that laps her pearly gates,
And swept the circle of the seven-fold heaven
Ere mortals marked a moment's flight below.
So bright, the while I caught thy passing form;
So brief, or ere I lost it.
Chance, 'tis thy chequered influence to dispense
The hour that gives him to my visible eyes,
The hour that memory treasures; but I boast,
Beyond thy sport or spleen, one solace yet,
One last, one dear, one sad—Oh, 'tis when eve
Dispreads her dew-wove veil, when no rude eye
Marks my wan cheek, slow step, and start abrupt
(Pale passion's guide, the weeds of fancy's thrall),
To wander and to muse unmarked, unknown,
To trace the thought no breast has e'er conceived,
To heave the sigh no ear has ever drank,
And thine must never—thine of all must never—
Oh, 'tis to wish impossibilities!
Yet start to think them real, 'tis to trace
My sad tale in these sands, while aimless hope
Points the approaching in th' imagined hour;
Woos to the stored spot thy wandering eye,
And all's disclosed. Oh, then I fly! deface,
Disperse them quick, lest one surviving trace
Should tell the tale, I'd—give a world thou knew'st.
'Tis oft to pour the secret yet untold
In lines like these, of love's despair that hopes,
Then rend the fragments, give them to the winds,
Tremble, lest one be wafted to thine hand,
While dreams the extinctless hope, "Perhaps it may."
Oh, 'tis to waste my life in prayers to see thee,
And when thy distant form relumes my view
To hide me, and to fly; then, when thou'rt past,
To kiss the light-press'd path, th' imagined spot
Thy shade has crossed and hallowed—oft my soul,
Sunk in voluptuous vacancy, resigns
Herself to float down fancy's fairy stream
(Unconscious and unheeding of its lapse).
Oh, then, how bright the dream! its magic tints
Paint passion possible, and nature kind.
Thee, thee, I see, I hear I touch—hark, hark—
The vesper-bell—it tells me of despair.

Of the next, whatever the execution might be, the subject was, perhaps, the most interesting that could occur in poetry: it purported to represent a mind deeply sunk in passion, yet alive to a feeling the most painful and hostile to passion that can exist—a conviction of the unworthiness of its object. The struggles of reluctant conviction and the anguish of involuntary fondness were portrayed as in a narrative; but Ippolito easily discovered the sentiments and situation of the unfortunate nun.

————————He died—living he died.
Living, but dead to her, whose ceaseless toil
To win him from the weary paths of sin,
Long with vain essay strove; but when she found
That on a mind so weak, no lofty precept
To virtue's lore wrought with incitement high,
That on a soil so light, instruction's seed
Fell fruitless; like the exiled Hagar of yore,
(Who, wandering in the wilds of Beer-Sheba,
Saw the last morsel of her pittance spent,
Saw its last drop scarce wet her babe's parched lip,
And seeing, said, with hopeless anguish bowed—
Let me not see him die!—and went far off
And wept); so went she to a spot remote,
And wept—ceaseless and silent wept; no gleam
Of tremulous light played on her evening hour,
No sheeny phantoms of the tints of morn
Wove to her eye the painted visions of joy,
Or struck their airy harps far heard. Her life
Was lone, her purpose strange, but never brake.
She reared an antic structure, wild and simple,
Like some lone eremite's tomb, and called it his.
She watched beside his tomb in patience, pale,
With sunk and tearless eye, and lips that moved
In inward prayer for him, whom she deemed dead
To all worth living for. She hung that tomb
With garlands, fancy-wrought, and dim of hue;
They were as wild as mountain-spirits' song,
They mocked all rule, and scorned all art—and yet
No child of feeling true might see that wreath,
Nor wake their waning colours with a tear.
Far other employ she hoped for them—with these
She would have strewn his path, or wreathed his brow,
Or decked the polished hours of virtuous life.
But little did he reck of virtuous life,
Or aught but the loose flow of dance and song,
And roar of midnight revel—said she heard.
And still she sat in pale and pined constancy;
Yet not without impulse of natural sorrow,
(Strong throes of anguish, cleaving still to life),
She thought on her last hopes, her withered heart,
Her youth departed, and her mind decayed.
Yet still she loved—yea, still loved hopeless on.
Infatuate passion desperate still lit
Her hollow eye, still warmed her fevered lip—
The memory of her first love, like rich music,
Sung in her witched ear. She was condemned
T' outlive the object, but the passion—never.

The author appeared to have had a knowledge of the unhappy life of the person she was attached to, deeper than was necessary to furnish the garniture of poetical sorrow. She appeared intimately to feel and to deplore, with the mingled zeal of religion and love, the evil habits that had overspread and abused a noble heart. Such were the feelings intended to be portrayed in the following lines:—

That tempting fruit, how ripe it hangs,
How rich it grows on high!
And there I reach my helpless hands,
There fix my straining eye.

Oh, not for me those gay tints rich
Its mellow cheek adorn;
Ah, not for me its odours fine
Vie with spring's bud-wreath'd morn.

Oh, but to taste those nectar'd sweets,
That I a bird might be;
Oh, that I were the common air,
Uncheck'd that blows on thee.

How o'er thy ripe cheek's glowing down
Would I my soft tale sing;
How faint amid the sweets I fann'd,
With rapture-dancing wing.

How would I chase each reptile rude
That saps thy wasted bloom;
How would my whispering pennons play,
To wake thine hid perfume.

Enough for me the joy to view
Thy purer beauties glow,
Bid unrestrained those odours rise
Whose sweets I ne'er must know.

In these lines Ippolito discovered an attempt made to express a strange and complicated feeling that often occurs in real love, when existing under a disparity of circumstances—'tis that feeling which arises from a mixed sensation of moral debasement and worldly rank and splendour, of which the effect is partly to awe by magnificence and partly to interest by compassion.

The unfortunate vestal seemed to be betrayed by the very feelings on which she depended for her defence; she was evidently fascinated by the rank, the spirit, and the excesses of the man she loved, as well as by the qualities by which love is more properly excited; she was dazzled by the glare of the very vices she affected to deprecate; she was struck with involuntary admiration of splendid dissoluteness and tumultuous grandeur; yet often the sentiments of these lines spoke merely the sighs of desire, such as are poured out in the involuntary excess of the mind, and without a reference either to hope or to despair. Such were the following:

I wish I were a vernal breeze
To breathe upon that cheek of down,
Then I might breathe without a fear,
Then I might sigh without a frown.

I wish I were a burnished fly
To sport in thine eye's sunny sheen;
There wing my raptured hour unheard,
There dazzled droop, and die unseen.

I wish I were a blushing flower
Within thy breast one hour to reign;
Then I might live without a crime,
Then I might die without a pain.

Sometimes, amid this blaze of luxuriant fondness, a sudden cloud of remorse and horror would intervene, as in these lines:—

Oh, come to my arms, whose faltering clasp
Is still folding thy phantom in air;
Oh, visit mine eye, whose fancy-wrought spell
Is still raising thy form in its sphere.

Oh, let my languid head sink on thy breast,
Other refuge or rest it has none;
Oh, let my full heart once heave upon thine,
And its throbs and its tumults are done.

And I'll lose, while my swimming eye floats on thy form,
All thought but the thought it is thine;
And I'll quench in the nectar that bathes thy red lip
The fever that's burning in mine.

And lapt in the dream, I'll forget that a voice
Would recall, that a fear would reprove—
Till I start as the lightning is lanced at my head,
And wonder there's guilt in our love.

With these alternate struggles of passion that could not stifle conscience, and principle too weak to contend with passion, many others were filled. One arrested Ippolito's attention, from having the following sentence in prose prefixed to it: "The disguise I have assumed supplies me with many an hour of weak indulgence. Sometimes I pass almost close to him, catch the sounds of his voice, linger at night near his dwelling—drops of slow poison each; but how fatal sweet. Last night I touched the very railing on which I saw him lean but an hour before as he descended the steps—touched it. Ildefonsa reproached me; but I have resisted other reproaches than hers; why should I yield to human monitions what I have refused to those of my own heart and of heaven?"

'Tis vain—'tis vain my lips to move,
'Tis vain my arms to sever;
Thou hast my everlasting love,
And thou shalt have it ever.

Oh, why to tempt my doubted faith,
Those dread recitals borrow?
Know, trifler, they who dare to live,
Dread not to die of sorrow.

Why tell the pangs of vows unheard,
The woe of hopes undone?
To weep was all my vows e'er woo'd,
To weep was all they won.

I asked to view thy heaven-lit eye,
Till these weak eyes were blasted;
I asked to view that bliss-bathed lip,
Till mine with wishing wasted.

No soft reward of blameless love
E'er soothed mine unheard wooing;
For, oh, a glance was frenzy's fire,
A touch had been undoing.

Not mine to love with florid heart,
I wove no poet-willow;
My inward tears prey'd on my heart,
My hush'd sighs scorch'd my pillow.

No cherish'd hope of rich return
E'er sooth'd with promised pleasure;
Love rifled all my native store,
But gave no added treasure.

The tear that seeks the shade to fall,
The sigh that silence breathes,
And this fond moment's wilder woe,
Are all that love bequeaths.

Chill emblem of my iron fate,
Yet guiltless I may grasp thee;
Woo thy cold kiss without a blush,
And wildly, fondly clasp thee.

Then take, oh take, this feverous kiss,
To meet his lip vain burning;
And take, oh take, this smothered sigh,
That woos no fond returning.

And crush, oh crush, this harass'd breast,
No more to wild hope waking,
And take (oh, would it were the last)
Throbs of a heart that's breaking.

I'd rather breathe these hopeless sighs
Than vows of sanctioned duty;
I'd rather leave this lost kiss here
Than press the lip of beauty.

But oh, the bitter—bitter thought
That thus it must be, ever
To woo thy shade, to watch thy step,
But nearer—never, never.

To feel my lips unbidden form
What they must never say;
To feel my eyes in gazing fixed,
In gazing waste away.

Of vision'd days and restless nights,
A weary length to roll,
With passion on my fever'd lip,
And anguish in my soul.

Yet some relief to weep and vow,
What time can frustrate—never,
Thou hast my everlasting love,
And thou shalt have it ever.

Ippolito had perused these lines, stretched on the mossy roots of an ash in a wild dell; when he had finished the last, he perceived that the evening had already gathered round him. He rose, and remounting his horse, which was fastened to an adjacent tree, rode homeward to the hamlet.

He lingered in the way, for the images of sadness had combined with the hues of evening to pour a voluptuous melancholy over his soul. Within a furlong of the hamlet he entered a woody defile, where the branches of the tall, thick trees, meeting above, excluded light even at noonday, and now deepened the gloom of gathering night. Across the high banks and matted wood-path of this dell, the roots of the trees branched into a thousand antic ridges and curvings; while above, the foliage, so thick and bowery, scarce admitted the wind to whisper through its leaves, or the birds to find their way to the nests, that seemed woven into a verdurous wall. Ippolito paused, as he entered it, to mark the rich gleam of western light its opposite extremity admitted. At that moment, a face appearing beside him, audibly pronounced, "Why do you linger here? Your fate may be forgotten, but it will not be long unfulfilled." It seemed to pass him as it spoke, and was lost in the gloom of the wood.

It was the voice, the face of the stranger: in darkness, in midnight, he would have known it. He lost not a moment in thought; the very force of his fear gave him speed like a whirlwind; calling, commanding, adjuring him to stay or to return, he plunged into the wood, and while he could trace his shadow in thought, or the vestige of motion, or sound that followed him, he pursued it with a speed that seemed to make all human flight unavailing. It was in vain; in an hour he was many miles from the dell in the wood, but had not obtained a glimpse of him he pursued. His feelings were too tempestuous to weigh circumstances, or pause over doubts; he had but one object—to discover if this dreaded being could really pervade all space, and overtake all flight—if he had in vain called on the mountains to cover him, and hid himself where even the jealous rage of superstition had failed to discover him. He paused on a rising ground, to catch the last remains of the light, as they faded over the wide prospect before him. He saw at a distance what he at first believed to be a young tree, whose branches were tossed by the wind; but his eye, sharpened by fear, was not long deceived—it was a human figure, tall and dark, that moved onward with amazing swiftness, and whose outspread and streaming garments were flung to the wind, like the foliage of a tree. Again he called—again he hastened forward; but his voice was only echoed by winds and woods, and his speed only led him to wilder haunts and remoter distance.

He rode all night with unabated eagerness of pursuit, and, towards morning, first felt his confidence decline on seeing before him a town, from whose numerous avenues roads branched in every direction. But though not successful, he yielded to the weariness of the noble animal that bore him, and entering the first inn he saw, summoned the camariere, and inquired, had a person of the stranger's appearance, which he described, shuddering at his own precision, passed through the town? The man listened to him with a look which Ippolito thought might be owing to the stern earnestness of his own, but replied, without hesitation, there had not. Ippolito then dismissed him, and, wearied by the wanderings of the night, sunk into a perturbed and broken sleep.

When he awoke, he perceived he had devoted more hours to repose than his time admitted; the day was far spent, and he called impatiently for his horse. No plan of pursuit was suggested to him, but he determined to follow the open track of country through the principal towns, and inquire for the stranger as he passed through each.

As he quitted the inn, a servant appeared with his horse; a rustic was leaning carelessly against a post of the shed from which he had been just led. Ippolito observed, as he sprung

into his seat, that the servant eyed him intently, and inquired the reason.—"You are very like a cavalier I have seen in Naples, signor," said the man.—"And what of this cavalier?" said Ippolito, pausing.—"Nothing, signor, but that I should not like much to see him in this house—I do not think I should ever sleep in it again."—"Has the cavalier the power of banishing sleep from the houses he visits?"—"It is said he never sleeps himself, signor; he has other employments at night."—"What may those be?" said Ippolito.—"Pardon me, signor, I dare not speak of him or them." He crossed himself with signs of strong fear.—"But I would wish you to be more circumstantial," said Ippolito, who readily comprehended whom he meant, and who wished to know the probable extent of his danger, and become familiar with its terrors.—"I should wish to know him, should it be my chance to encounter him."—"You will easily know him by yourself, signor," said the man, retiring; "he is just your stature and figure."

This comparison suggested another idea to Ippolito—the stranger and he were exactly of the same stature; he pressed his inquiries on the man, adding,—"It is of importance to me to be acquainted with the description of this person. I am in pursuit of one myself, whom, perhaps, it may assist me to discover."—"The person of whom you are in quest," said the peasant, who had not before spoken, "is already gone before you, signor; he is by this time at Bellano."—Amazed at this intelligence, so abruptly given, yet unwilling to expend time in inquiring how it was obtained, Ippolito hastily asked the distance and direction of Bellano. The peasant informed him, and Ippolito was hasting away, when a suspicion of this strange intelligence crossed his mind, and he waved his hand to the peasant to approach him. The man lingered with a reluctant air. Ippolito again signified his wish to speak with him, and the man advanced slowly and irresolutely.—"From whom had you this intelligence?" said Ippolito.—"I do not know, signor."—"How! not know? Is it possible you could converse with a human being, and not know to whom you spoke?"—"I know not if he were a human being," said the man.—"What is it you say? What manner of man was he that spoke with you?"—"Why do you ask? I pray to the Virgin I may never see either of you again. You know him well enough. I dare say he is beside you now, though no Christian eye can see him."—"What insolence is this! or is it frenzy rather? Slave, do you know to whom you speak?" said Ippolito.—"Slave!" repeated the man, with strong resentment, "'tis you are a slave, and to the worst of masters. I would not change with you, though this shed is my only dwelling, were you on a throne of gold. Poor, wretched, deluded creature, your grandeur is lent on hard conditions, and for a miserable moment of time. I see, even now, melancholy appearing through those noble, beautiful features you have assumed. I wonder all those gold trappings do not blaze up in rows of sulphur while I talk to you. But I have discharged my conscience. I dare not say farewell to you; but I trust to see you soon in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and that is the best wish a good Catholic can give you."

Ippolito, overpowered by the impassioned tones in which the man poured out his horror and aversion, and by his fears of more general and serious persecutions, retreated without remonstrance, and hastily took the road to Bellano. He understood too well the suspicious hints of the groom, and the open rage of the peasant.

There is no country in the world where pursuits, such as Ippolito's, are observed with more jealousy, or abhorred with a more "perfect hatred," than in Italy. Ippolito saw all the horrors of his fate, and cursed his visionary imprudence too late. The innocence of his intentions, and his exemption even from the transgressions to which it might be supposed to lead, it was useless to avow to himself; and who else would believe him? To have sought the secrets of the other world as a diversity of levity, and to be conversant in them, without sacrificing our spiritual welfare, was what could not be easily, nor indeed probably believed. But all excuse or vindication was too late. Suspicion haunted his footsteps; the relentless vigilance of superstition had an eye on him for evil, and not for good; once excited, her persecution was inexorable, and her rancour mortal.

His dark and secret trials were known, and instead of exciting compassion, and ensuring shelter and protection they had only awakened hatred and fear. It was little consolation to him to reflect, that the conversations he had heard had passed among the rustics of obscure villages. The rage of the vulgar is more deadly and indiscriminating, less liable to be pacified by representations, less assailable by any medium of rational vindication, and more apt to vent itself in sanguinary violence, than that of the higher orders. Besides,

the knowledge that had reached them must have been first diffused through every other rank in society.

A dreadful feeling of abandonment and proscription began to overshadow his soul. The rudeness of the scene—rocks and waters seen in a cloudy twilight—fed the dark tumult of his thoughts. As his consciousness of the hatred of mankind increased, a sense of hatred to mankind increased along with it. He wished, in the wildness of the hour, for some banditti or mountaineer to cross his path, or to rush from the hollow of the rocks upon him—his tall dark figure and waving sabre, like the pines which bowed their branches almost to his saddle-bow as he passed them. He wished for some object of enmity—some struggle of violence, to exhaust the eager beatings of his fury, to quench that aversion to mankind which he felt their persecution had alreay kindled in his heart.

Impatient with solitude, he contended with nature and the elements; he spurred his horse to passes that seemed inaccessible; he delighted to gallop up precipices, to ford streams, and to wind along the giddy and pointed ridge of rock where the heron and the crane were first startled by the foot of man; he pushed right against the blast when it blew with vehemence; and held on his path where, for a mile, the foam of every returning wave of a lake beat against his horse's mane.

It was now the close of evening when he descried Bellano. A few scattered huts, interspersed with larger buildings now in ruins, overspread the view to some distance. From what this desolation proceeded, Ippolito could not discover. The soil was fertile, though neglected; but in the houses and their inmates there was an appearance of staring wildness and of squallid dejection, such as he had never yet beheld. He looked around in vain for an inn, or any place where he might either procure repose for the night, or information on the object of his journey.

As he passed slowly through the narrow streets for the first time, he imagined that the eye of all he saw was fixed on him; that his name and fortunes were legible on his brow. Whatever knowledge of him had been betrayed before, was communicated in hints and whispers, was avowed with timidity, and murmured round till it was lost in the fears of the speakers. But now he seemed to feel that a general spirit of inquisition had fastened on him; that every one either pursued him with suspicion, or shrunk from him in terror.

Wearied, dismayed, and disappointed, he struck into the skirts of the town. They were now dark and lonely. He flung the reins on the neck of his horse, and loitered on without object. At this moment the figure of the stranger visibly passed him. He paused a moment; and then, throwing himself off his horse, adjured him, with the most earnest and solemn supplications, to appear, and inform him in audible words why he was thus pursued and persecuted. Not a sound followed his adjurations—not a step crossed him.

After following an imaginary track for some time, he found his progress checked by a rising ground, on which stood a large edifice, dimly seen in the evening light. Its buildings, spreading over an extent of ground, presented a range of shadow, heavy, sombrous, and solitary. It bore no mark of habitation; no smoke ascended from the roof; no step echoed round the walls. Ippolito gazed on it irresolutely, yet with a strong impulse to enter it. It was certainly the point of termination to the direction he had pursued; and the direction was what the stranger, if he moved on earth, had probably taken.

At a little distance he saw a peasant approaching, who seemed, like himself, to linger near the building. There was a promising confidence and simplicity in his manner. Ippolito thought it best to preface his inquiries with some vague observations on the desolation around them. "Yes, signor," said the peasant, "something has happened to the place; I think it looks as if it were cursed."—"But what has been the cause of the indigence and loneliness I see prevailing here, not only among these ruins, but among the inhabitants of the village?"—"They are wretched and oppressed, signor. A strange suspicion hangs over this place. There is a horrible tale told of it. I do not like to relate the circumstances, I have heard them related so differently; but since they happened, the inhabitants of this place, which was then flourishing, have been scattered and desolated."—"What are those circumstances, so strange that could depopulate a country, and leave such marks of ruin behind them?" said Ippolito, glad of the relief of local curiosity. "They relate," said the peasant, "to a murder committed, or supposed to be committed, on a man who was intrusted with some affair of

extraordinary import. The murderer was never discovered, nor his motives for the action even conjectured; and however the circumstances are told by a hundred mouths, the wise seem to imply, none of them in fact ever transpired."—"But is it possible no steps were ever taken to trace this mysterious affair?"—"I know not, signor. There was a great, powerful, wicked family said to be concerned in it. They had influence to crush all inquiry. No one that contended with that house ever prospered. They do not want power for outward means, nor villany for secret ones. So, whoever opposes them fares like the inhabitants of Bellano."—"Was the whole village, then, implicated in this strange transaction?—"They were punished as if they had been, signor. Good night, signor. I do not like lingering near the spot at this hour. This is the very house in which the deed was done."

The peasant retired. Ippolito surveyed the structure. He saw it was safe from solitude and fear. In the village, wild and deserted as it seemed, he dreaded discovery; he dreaded the unknown effects of the stranger's machinations. Weary of persecution, and impatient for gloomy quiet, he thought with pleasure of plunging into the recesses of a solitude, from which even superstition, that haunted him in every other retreat, would recoil with shuddering.

Again he surveyed the building; and, ascending the rising ground, traversed the dismantled wall that enclosed it. It was spacious and ruinous. The dark lines of the building were strongly defined on the deep blue of a clear autumnal sky, in which the stars, faintly emerging, tipt here and there a battlement or a turret with silver. He found the principal doors fastened; and, as he examined the wall more closely, to discover some means of admission, he thought a figure started and disappeared in the same moment from behind a projecting angle of the building. He pursued eagerly, but vainly; yet as he turned away, something like a sound issuing from the interior of the building struck on his ear. He listened; all was still. He now renewed his search, and soon discovered a low door, which required but little force to open, and which admitted him into a passage lofty and dimly lit. It conducted him to the principal hall, from which doors and passages branched in every direction. All were alike dark and deserted. No foot seemed to have trod there for many years, and their long perspectives led the eye to a shadowy depth it feared to penetrate.

As Ippolito gazed around him, a shadow, faint and undefined, passed along the other extremity of the hall. He would have looked on it as one of the imaginary shapes that seem to people the shades of obscurity; but the next moment he heard a sound too distinct to be the production of fantasy, that seemed to die away in distance.

He sprang forward, and found himself at the foot of a spacious staircase, over whose broken steps the darkness made it difficult to proceed. As he ascended them, he loudly and repeatedly called on the person whom he imagined he had seen; assured him he had nothing to apprehend from violence or malignity; that he was himself a lonely traveller, who was willing to unite with him for mutual security in that solitary mansion, and to whom it would therefore be more prudent to disclose himself. No answer was returned to his remonstrances, and he was checked in their repetition by the loud clapping of a door in a remote part of the building. That this dreary place had inhabitants he had now no doubt. Who they might be, or what was their purpose, he resolved to examine, with a boldness which was the offspring of desperation. He was delighted with a summons that seemed equal to the powers of his mind, and did not threaten to taint with guilt or blast him with infamy. The stranger was not here to demand from him the energy of a hero, and then predict to him the fate of a villain. The event of this adventure might perhaps exercise his imagination or task his courage, but could scarcely affect his peace, his principles, or his character.

He had now ascended the stairs, and paused for some moments in a gallery which seemed to communicate with several chambers: from one of them a light appeared to issue at intervals; he entered it, and was surprised to see some embers of a wood fire dimly burning on the hearth. From their blaze, which rose fitfully, and expired as the wind hissed through the dismantled casements, waving the feeble fire, he discovered an apartment like the rest, spacious and dreary. Not a vestige of furniture, or any circumstance but that of the fire, indicated the presence of a human being in the building; his eye wandered over walls, ceiling, and floor; not an object struck him, but the damp, misty obscurity of decay. The room was chill—he approached the fire; the blaze became more strong, and by its increasing light he discovered in the wall opposite him a narrow grating; the dusky bars gleamed in the fire-light, and as he

continued to look on them, a human countenance appeared distinctly on the other side. Ippolito started—he advanced to the grating—the face disappeared, and a piteous cry issued from within. Ippolito now earnestly demanded who was concealed in the apartment, threatening, with serious anger, to punish any one he might discover, unless they avowed themselves and the causes of their concealment.

The grating was then thrown open, and the servant by whom Ippolito had been so imprudently betrayed at Celano threw himself at his feet. "Oh, signor," said he, after a long and unintelligible vindication of himself, "why did you leave me at Celano?"—"Why did you compel me to do so by your folly in exposing my name?" said Ippolito. "It was not my fault, signor; it was not my fault; I never travelled with a wizard before, and I could not know."—"A wizard, idiot! you will drive me mad."—"Illustrious signor, I kiss your feet; be not angry with me in this dreadful solitary place. Alas! I have suffered enough for it since; those devils at Celano were near tearing me to pieces; and when I escaped from them, I lost my way returning to Naples; and after wandering about in this wild country, dreading to make inquiries, lest I should be discovered and sent to the Inquisition, I crawled in here to-night, to sleep in one of these waste rooms, and pursue my journey to-morrow, and little thought I should have the ill-luck (good fortune I mean) to behold you again."—"But why," said Ippolito, "did you fly from me on the stairs? you surely must have heard my voice, and when have its tones denounced danger to you?"—"I did not fly," said the man; "I was not on the stairs."—"'Tis but now I pursued some one to this very apartment," said Ippolito. "By all the holy saints, I have not quitted the room since I entered the building!" said the man. "This is most strange," said Ippolito, musing; "I am pursued by a power that seems to possess more than human resources; resistance is vain; I am spent in this struggle. But how was it possible you should conceal yourself, if you did not fly from me?"—"The door by which you entered, signor, is under the windows of this room; and when I saw you, I concealed myself, and have not quitted this room since you entered the door below."—"And why did you conceal yourself?" said Ippolito; "to me, in the same circumstances, the sight of you, or of any human being, would have been most welcome." The man hesitated. "Why did you conceal yourself?" repeated Ippolito; "you knew me, and knew that from me you had nothing to fear."—"I knew you, indeed," said the man, shuddering, "and therefore I hid myself. Ah, signor, it is well known for what purpose you seek these solitary places, and whom you are accustomed to meet in them; I thought the roof shook over my head as you came under it." He crossed himself with the strongest marks of fear. "Mother of God!" exclaimed Ippolito; in agony, "is it possible? Am I so utterly lost? Do my own species tremble at my approach? Hear me, my good fellow; you who have lived with me, who have been lavishly nurtured with every indulgence a generous master could afford, can you believe the horrid tales that are told of me? I attest the blessed name I have just mentioned, and every saint in heaven, that I am as innocent as you are! I have entered into no compact with the enemy of souls; I am no dealer in witchery; I am a crossed and care-haunted man; a restless and unhappy spirit is within me; it has driven me from my home, and instead of being soothed and healed by the compassion of mankind, it is aggravated and maddened by the brutal rage of ignorance, till existence has become loathsome to me."

In the ardour of his appeal, Ippolito had laid his hand on the man's shoulder; the man recoiled from his touch. Ippolito felt it in every nerve, and was again about to expostulate with him, when a strange hollow sound seemed to issue from a distance, and approach the room. "I will believe it, I do believe it all," said the man eagerly; "but say no more now, signor; this is no time or place for such subjects."—"Can this place have other inhabitants?" said Ippolito, pausing from his remonstrance to follow the sound. "Surely it has," said the man. "Have you seen or heard anything since you entered it; any shape or sound like this?"—I have, indeed, signor. Just before you entered, the shadow of a dark figure passed the door, and I am convinced I afterwards heard heavy steps on the stairs; but in these old mansions the wind makes such strange noises, that unless one's eyes assure them—"

Here the man's face underwent a convulsion of terror, and flying on Ippolito, he held him with the strong grasp of fear. "What have you seen?" said Ippolito, supporting him, "or what is it you fear?"—"A hand beckoned to me from that grating," said the man, in inward and struggling tones. "'Tis this bickering blaze deceives you," said Ippolito, stirring the

embers with his sword, and looking at the grating; "the light it flings on these mouldy walls is so pale and fitful."—"No, no, signor, I know this place and its history well; I marvel that its inhabitants have taken so little note of our intrusion yet; but they will not long neglect us."—"You know this place is inhabited, and by whom?" said Ippolito. "By the spirits of a murderer and its punishers," said the man, rolling his eyes fearfully around him. "Why do you pause with so many starts of fear?" said Ippolito; "speak plainly and fully what you have heard of this place, and of the cause of its desertion."—"You know them, perhaps, better than I do, signor," said the man. "How is it possible I should know them? it is scarce an hour since I entered these walls."—"Because they relate to your family."—"To my family?" said Ippolito, as recollection faintly wandered over his mind; then added, in an evasive tone, "there are many circumstances relating to my family of which I am ignorant."—"Do you wish to hear what is told of this mansion, signor?" said the man, pursuing the subject. "If your courage is sufficiently recovered to relate it," said Ippolito, wishing to suggest an excuse to him. The man proceeded in his narrative.

"It is some years back, signor, since this was an inn; and as the town was flourishing, and in good repute, I suppose the inn was so likewise. It so happened that this inn was full of company on a night, and they were all employed speaking of some strange mysterious business that was about to be disclosed shortly, that they said would involve one of the *first families in Naples*. I know not whether it was a monk, or an assassin, that was to make the discovery; but, whatever it was, the import of it was expected to be most singular and terrible. So, as the guests were all conversing, and each giving his conjectures and reasons, a person was ushered in, accompanied by a guard of soldiers, not as a prisoner, but in order to defend him on his journey; he spoke but little, and seemed dejected and terrified, like a man labouring under a great secret.

"It was immediately whispered about the house, that this was the person who was to make the discovery, and many inquiries, and hints of advances, were made, to learn what it might be; but the stranger was so distant, that, one by one, the guests all dropped off to their own rooms, and left him to go to his about midnight. So he did, but never was seen to return from it, signor; no trace of him was the next morning to be seen, nor ever since.

"The house was examined, the guests were detained, the host and his family committed to prison, from whence they never emerged. Then the fury of the law fastened on the town; the wretched inhabitants were sent, some to the gallies, and some to the Inquisition, but no intelligence of the stranger was ever procured; but, ever since that night, this place has been visited with strange appearances. Tenant after tenant quitted the house; and at length it was deserted, and left to decay, as you see. The very last inhabitant told me, that as he was sitting one dark evening, about the close of autumn, it might have been in this very room—"—"Hark! hark!" said Ippolito and his servant to each other at the same moment.

A pause, deep and breathless, followed. "Did you hear a noise?" said Ippolito, in a suppressed tone. "I did, signor; it resembled, methought——"—"And I see a shape," said Ippolito, springing forward; "it glided past the door that moment; I saw it with these eyes; I saw its shadow flitting along the gallery."

He was rushing out. "Holy saints!" cried the man, clinging round him, "you will not follow it?"—"Away, dastard!" said Ippolito, snatching a brand from the fire to excite a stronger light. "I shall die if I remain here alone," said the man. "Then follow me," said Ippolito, who had already reached the stairs. He looked around. All was dark and stilly. The flaring and uneven light of the brand quivered in strange reflections on the walls. As he still looked down the gallery, the shadows at the farther end seemed to embody themselves, and portray something like the ill-defined outlines of a human shape. He held up the light, and it vanished with visible motion. Ippolito impetuously pursued. The passage terminated at the foot of a narrow and spiral staircase. As he ascended it, the echoes of another step were heard distinctly above; and something like the brush of a vestment, floating between the shattered balustrade, almost extinguished the light.

Encouraged, not repelled, Ippolito sprung upward with great velocity, and soon reached the top of the staircase. A figure, strongly visible, but still obscure, now appeared at some distance; and waving to him with shadowy gesture, disappeared to the left without a sound.

At this moment the last blaze of the brand quivered and expired. Ippolito stood lapped

in uncertainty. A step from below approached. It was the servant; who, binding two of the faggots together, advanced with a stronger light. "Come quickly," said Ippolito; "it disappeared here—here to the left." The man followed him, aghast and reluctant, but dreading solitude more than even the apparition they were pursuing. They entered a room, the only one to the left. The figure he beheld appeared to have vanished through the walls. Ippolito examined the wainscot and the casements; the latter commanded a view so extensive, that he discovered the room was situated in one of the turrets of the building. All was silence and desolation still.

"By what mysterious agency," said Ippolito, "does this form hover over space, without being confined by it?" A sound, like the fall of some ponderous body—a sound that seemed to shake the walls, and sink into the depths of the earth, roused him from his musing. The concussion was so violent that it flung open a low door in the wainscot, which had hitherto escaped his notice.

Ippolito approached it. Within he beheld an apartment, the extent of which was lost in shades, that were, for a moment, dispersed by a pale blue light, that fluttered over them, and then disappeared.

Ippolito, taking the light from his servant, whose countenance spoke the very despair of fear, entered the room. "This," said he, as he waved the light above his head, that slowly broke through a gloom of frowning and peculiar blackness, "this should be the very seat of those marvellous operations. There is a depth of shadow, a majesty of night and horror here—here I pause—that wandering shape rested here—here he will either return, or appear no more."—"What is that dark mass in that corner?" said the servant, who had crept after him. Ippolito approached the spot he pointed to, and discovered the remains of an antique bed. "Make haste, signor, and quit this apartment; the brand is almost extinguished," said the servant. "You must go down and relight it; I shall not quit this spot to-night," answered Ippolito. "Go down—by myself! Blessed Virgin! no; nor for the pope in person," said the man. "Did you not come up by yourself?"—"Ay; but, signor, I was coming to you; I heard your steps, and thought of you the whole way. But to go to an empty room—to feel every step I am getting further from you—and at length to venture into the very hold and haunt of other things than myself; no, signor, not if I were to get a cardinal's hat for it."—"We must then remain in the dark till morning. I shall on no account quit this spot."—"Then, signor, I shall throw myself at your feet, and wrap my head in my cloak; and, for the love of grace, speak no more till you tell me that morning has dawned, and that you have seen nothing all night."—"I subscribe to one of the conditions; the other, perhaps, it will not be in my power to observe."

The man threw himself at Ippolito's feet, who, glad of an opportunity of silent meditation, leant against the wall, fixing his eye on the dying flashes of the brand which he had placed in the hearth. Its broad glare danced on the ceiling, transforming the characters of damp and decay into forms as fantastic as the lines of magic; and now, shrunk into a point, scarce showed the rude and blackened stones on which it was consuming. In the veering light Ippolito once thought he saw a form in a remote part of the chamber; but the next moment it expired, leaving a thousand imagined shapes to darkness.

At this moment the servant, half raising himself, whispered—"Signor, I hear a person breathing near me."—"You hear my respiration probably," said Ippolito. "No, signor, no; it is the breath of one who breathes with difficulty, as if he were trying to suppress it; there—there—it passed me now—blessed saints, how near! Signor, if I live, I felt the rushing of a garment past me that moment."—"Hush!" said Ippolito; "you will not let me distinguish if any one is in motion near us." They both paused some time. Not a sound was heard. "I am stifled holding in my breath," said the man. "You may draw it in peace," said Ippolito; "no one seems inclined to molest us; and if there should, against visionary assailants I have innocence—and against corporeal ones, a sword."

He spake the latter sentence aloud; for the objects he had witnessed were such as human power could easily produce; and he endeavoured to resist his strong propensity to search for supernatural powers in every object above ordinary life. In a short time the servant forgot his fears in sleep; and Ippolito, exhausted by recent fatigue, slumbered, as he leant against the wainscot. The visions of his sleep were like the spirits whose agitation had produced them, *wild and* perturbed.

He dreamt he was kneeling at the altar of a church which was illuminated for a midnight mass. Around, or near him, he saw no one either to partake or administer the rite. At length a figure advanced from the recesses of the altar, and approached him; at the same moment he perceived his father and brother kneeling beside. A deep stillness spread over him as he gazed around; he experienced that sensation so common in sleep—the consciousness of some mystery we are unable to penetrate, but of which we silently expect the developement. The figure distributed the consecrated element. His father, on swallowing it, shrieked "poison!" in a tone of horror, and fell back expiring. At that moment the figure, throwing off his monkish weeds, discovered the person of the stranger arrayed in a voluptuous and martial habit.

He gazed with a fixed eye of horrid triumph on the contortions of the dying man, bent over him to catch his groans; and as his dim eyes wandered in agony, presented himself in every point to their view, exclaiming—"Behold!" The vision suddenly changed its scene and circumstances; Ippolito found himself in a vaulted passage, lit by a few sepulchral lamps; Annibal was beside him, and the stranger bearing a torch, and in the habit of a funereal mourner, stalking before them.

As Ippolito slowly seemed to recover his powers of observation, he perceived he was in a part of the Castle of Muralto he remembered to have traversed before. The stranger, waving them to follow, entered an apartment hung with the insignia of death; he remembered it well; it was the last of the chambers that communicated with the tower so long shut up. In the centre of the room stood a bier, covered with a pall; the stranger withdrew it, and pointed to Annibal and Ippolito the corse of their father beneath. Ippolito, retaining his natural impetuosity in sleep, snatched the torch from the stranger, and held it over the countenance of the dead; they were fixed in a kind of visionary sleep. As he still gazed, the lips began to move; and at length uttered some words of extraordinary import, which Ippolito vainly tried to recollect when he awoke. As he still gazed, the body extended one hand to him, and another to Annibal, seized on both, and drawing them under the pall, lapped them in total darkness. He shuddered, and awoke.

The light had long expired; it was succeeded by moonlight, dimly breaking through the discoloured windows, and figuring the floor with the rude imagery of their casement work.

He looked around him to dissipate the forms that still flitted before his eyes. On a part of the floor, where the light fell strongly, he observed a dark spot he had not beheld before, whose shadows, by their depth, seemed to fall within the floor. He approached it, and perceived a chasm of which he could not discover the depth. He examined it with his sword, and found there was a descent by steps within; he tried to follow them, but found their depth extended beyond his utmost reach. Here he paused for a moment, but his resolution was soon taken to descend and explore it.

There appeared to be something designed to tempt and to baffle him in the circumstances he had witnessed that tempted his courage as strongly as his imagination; they were circumstances, besides, such as human power and contrivance could easily produce, and such as human fortitude could easily cope with. The jealousy of imposition operated more powerfully on his high-toned mind than even his appetency for the marvellous; and of the latter too there was a lurking impulse that expedited his resolution.

His servant still slept, and Ippolito wished not to disturb him, as he would be equally clamorous at either alternative of accompanying him into the vault, or of remaining in solitude; his sleep would probably continue till the morning, and at morning he might depart in peace. He therefore commended himself to all the saints, and began to descend the steps. They were winding and irregular. He soon lost the faint reflections of moonlight, and, for a few moments, advanced in total darkness. He paused—for, to advance in darkness, was to encounter superfluous danger, when a flash of sudden light from below played on the dank, black walls, and showed him the rugged steps winding downward to a depth it was giddy to think of. The paleness and flitting disappearance of the light indicated the distance from which it issued; but, as Ippolito, encouraged by this dubious omen, eagerly proceeded, frequent flashes of a stronger light convinced him it was stationary, and that he was approaching it. He advanced—the light increased—it seemed the faint gleam of a lamp struggling with darkness. In a few moments he perceived it glimmered at a determinate distance, and sending up long streams

of abrupt light on the upper darkness. A few steps more brought him to a level: he entered a vaulted passage, low and black, hoary and chill with damps; at the entrance of it a lamp burnt feebly; he disengaged it from the wall with difficulty, (it was iron, of coarse and ancient structure,) and proceeded with it slowly, extending his sword before him. In the deep blackness of the perspective, no object, near or remote, could be descried; the air seemed almost materially thick and dark. A dim atmosphere of blueish light spread round the edges of the flame Ippolito carried, which shivered almost to dissolution, though he advanced with the most cautious slowness, dreading lest its extinction should leave him wandering for ever in darkness, or its motion should kindle the foul and pent-up vapours to a flame of which the explosion would be fatal. As he glided onwards, a sound he paused to distinguish came to his ear. He listened—it was a human groan; it was repeated; it was like the expression of mental anguish, more than of bodily; it seemed to issue from an immense distance. Ippolito called aloud in accents of encouragement; the sounds ceased. As he turned in the direction from which they had proceeded, his foot struck against something which he stooped to examine; it was a rosary and crucifix of wood; they were corroded by damp, but their shape was yet distinguishable.

As he examined it with that disposition which desires to look for proof in casual things, another light twinkled like a star in the passage beyond him, and a figure dimly defined appeared and vanished with the swiftness of a shadow. Ippolito, with alternate cries of menace and entreaty, adjured it to pause or to approach. It hovered for a moment on the remote edge of darkness, as if doubtful whether to obey him or not; but as he hastened forward to urge his importunity, it disappeared. Its motion was so evidently human that Ippolito felt inspirited with a hope of success as he pursued it, till his progress was suddenly entangled by something that lay on the ground. Impatiently he endeavoured to remove it with his hand—it was a heap of dusky and decayed garments, of which the shape was indistinguishable. As he threw it from him, the clank of a human bone rung against the vault.

He was now irresistibly checked, and, holding down his lamp, tried to discover whether any memorials of horror were near him, that might be avoided in his progress. Shuddering, he perceived the remains of a human skeleton scattered to some distance around him; the skull had dropped from the garment that was entangled round his steps. As he gazed around, unwilling to linger, and unable to depart, the lamp darted a bright and tapering flame upward, and then sinking down, quivered as if about to expire.

For a moment he believed the fluctuation of the light was owing to an influence connected with the object before him; but, on looking upward, he discovered an aperture, of which his eye could not measure the height, in the roof of the vault, through which the air rushing had almost extinguished the lamp. Comparing this circumstance with the spectacle before him, he immediately conjectured that the unfortunate person had been precipitated through the chasm, and dashed piecemeal by the fall, as the bones were scattered at various distances.

All thought of further pursuit was for a moment repelled; and in the interval, as Ippolito was withdrawing his eyes with the slowness of fascination from the object before him, the other light appeared approaching from a distance. Through the thick vapours of the vault, Ippolito could scarcely discover that it was supported by any visible hand; but, as it approached, he perceived it was the stranger who bore it! He had no time to collect his faculties—the stranger was already beside him. They viewed each other for some time without speaking a word, while the lights they held reflected to each the visage of the other as pale and fixed as that of the dead. At length, "Wherefore are you here?" said the stranger.—"Wherefore am I here?" repeated Ippolito: "Is that a question? What other shelter have you left me? Where can I fly without persecution and danger? I have been torn from life and from society; from the objects and occupations that are congenial to my age, my spirit, and my fortunes. I have been banished the presence and the sympathy of my own species; I hear nothing around me but the hiss of suspicion, or the mutterings of hatred. You have written a character of horror on my brow that my own menials read and fly from. You have poured a poisonous atmosphere around me that blasts and withers the feelings of every human being that approaches it. In the whirlwind of your pestilent progress, you have rent me from my own soil and station, and flung me on a bare and isolated precipice, where I stand the sport of every storm, shivering at my own desolation. You have done this—and dare

you ask me why I follow you even here?—why I pursue you to the very verge of being, to ask you for myself?"—"You do well," said the stranger, "to harbour amid such scenes as these; to such your fate is about to lead you; and you are right to habituate yourself to them: you are in your proper abode. Child of despair, I greet you well! Do you see these walls? Such shall soon be enclosing you: what the object at your feet is now, such you shall shortly be."—"Away with this horible jargon," cried Ippolito; "I will be duped by it no more. I have grovelled under you till I am weary of suffering and submission. These struggles are not of despair, but resistance; I have fled, not to shun, but to pursue. Mysterious and inscrutable tormentor, I have too long been your vassal: your power was illusive and imaginary—it was borrowed from my weakness; my visionary folly arrayed you in the attributes of imagined terror, but it can strip and mock you for its sport. My triumph shall have its turn now. I will change in a moment the parts my abject folly assigned us; you shall fly, and I will become the pursuer now. Yes, I will haunt you as you have haunted me. I will proclaim you to the vulgar—to children I will proclaim you; your shadowy movements, your mysterious dignity, shall be the tale of beldames. Horror shall be dispelled by familiarity, and contempt shall mock at the detected imposture. I will pursue you with an army of persecution, malediction, and ridicule: the horror of the virtuous, the hatred of the vulgar, the jealous fury of superstition, and the awful resentment of justice. You shall find what it is to drive a soul to despair. I will pursue you from place to place; I will chase and scatter you over the earth; on no part of its surface shall you rest; at no depth below it shall you be safe. Human power shall urge you to the limits of this world, and the vengeance of religion shall pursue you to the next. Ha! ha! what an idiot have I been! Yes, 'tis a glorious thought—to be revenged of you; to dash your sceptre of iron, your scourge of scorpions, from your hand, and to wield them against you; to deliver myself—to deliver the world—to do a service to heaven! Methinks I breathe a new element. The ground on which I tread bears me up since I have conceived the thought. The very activity of motion, the energy of pursuit, will be congenial to my nature, and a relief to my spirits."

The stranger listened without resentment, and paused long before he answered. "Unhappy boy! you grapple with a chain of adamant. You may run to its utmost extent—but what will that avail you? I hold it in my hand, I have measured its length, and numbered every link. If you were capable of reason, would you not perceive that this restlessness of mind, this appetite for vehement struggle and rapid pursuit, is but the oppressive sense of unaccomplished destiny? You feel that you have a task of which you imagine inventing another will destroy the remembrance and the responsibility. You are approaching a precipice with silent but gradual swiftness, and you imagine that short deviations and momentary sallies will alter the direction or intercept the fall. Do you not already perceive your power of resistance diminishing? Do you not perceive your excursions are shorter, and your progress more perceptible? Recollect, when to mention this subject was only to excite a torrent of rage and malediction: now you can definitely talk of its enormity; and the next step will be to consider that enormity as modified and palliated, till you contemplate it with horror no longer. Recollect, that when the former thought of it tinged your dreams, you would awaken with the force of horrible conceit, and practise every expedient of childish fear to sleep no more that night. You dreamed of it to-night, yet no waking consciousness of horror broke through your slumbers—no cold dew gathered on your brow; your teeth did not gnash, nor your limbs heave and quiver; your waking was the effect of accident—of an extraordinary accident. Recollect (and acknowledge the power that reads your heart) that your intended persecution of me is prompted by an irresistible desire to discover the motives which prompted my suggestion of the action; the means that would have been applied to its accomplishment; nay, its very form and circumstance, all horrible as they are. Such is the purpose with which you would pursue me; and how absurd to deprecate the contemplation of what it is the burning and inward thirst of your soul to satiate itself with the knowledge. What we desire from curiosity or fear to contemplate, we will soon be habituated to; and what we are habituated to soon ceases to be revolting. Thus you impose on yourself by the very means you take to avoid imposition. Your flight from evil is circular, and brings you to the very point from which you commenced it. The impulse, upon whose tide you float so triumphantly, is ebbing in its pride, and will bear you back to a depth and distance greater than even that you have emerged from."

"Mother of God!" said Ippolito, "I see I am lost." He staggered and gasped. "Human force cannot contend with this enemy. You are something which thought is unable to reach. You blend the familiarity of human temptation with the dark strength of the fiend. I am weak, and cannot contend; I am weary and amazed, and all strength has failed me. Had I the power of an angel in my arm or my brain, what would it avail? I stand before him naked and helpless as infancy. I think, and he tells me my thoughts. I deliberate, and he anticipates my resolution. I move, and my motions are measured and bounded. I fly, and my flight is overtaken and arrested. Night cannot veil nor the bowels of the earth hide me. I look upward, and the shadow of his hand is over me. I look downward, and I am thrown before his feet."

He mused in the stupor of horror, and murmured inwardly, "If the great blow to which I am urged could deliver me from this; if it could be struck, and all this terrible siege he lays to my soul cease with it—would it not be well?"

A dark smile passed over the stranger's face as the last words were spoken. Ippolito burst into rage again as he noted it.

"Devil, I see your triumph. You think I am parleying with guilt; you think you see the balance held with a trembling hand; you hope that despair has driven nature from her hold, and fixed her black banner in the very centre of her works. No! your infernal wisdom has deceived you. You are deep in the mysteries of iniquity, but your knowledge becomes foolishness when it has to deal with a human heart. You might as well predict the tossings of an earthquake as the struggles of a high-principled soul goaded to frenzy. I am indeed strongly beset. The enemy has had power over me, such as is seldom given him over man. These thoughts are often with me. My powers are shaken by a thousand impulses to evil. But hitherto I think I feel my actual abhorrence of guilt is undiminished. I think so. If I admit the thought of it more frequently and patiently, 'tis not because I am reconciled to it, but because———no matter, it is better not to think of the cause. I am sure I shall be upheld—I trust so; yet I am dark and lorn. Evil is gathering round me like night—night unbroken by a single ray of light. I would willingly cleave to nature and to my fellow men. I would call to them for comfort; I would lay hold on their hands for help; but they reject and abhor me. This is one of the fiend's subtlest devices; this is the very pith of his dark power. Yet still I am not cast down; I stand, though sore shaken. Yet, oh, when shall I be able to curse him and bid him depart?"

"There is no need—I am gone: but what will that avail you? The power you dread and deprecate is within you, where its gradual workings shall lead you to the very act for whose mention you curse and proscribe me. I attest night and this vault the witness of untold things; I attest these mouldering bones, and this dagger, on whose blade the gore you shed is yet visible; three months shall not elapse till you do the deed whose visioned horrors were disclosed to you in the chambers of our secresy. My task is now finished, and my office is ceased. When next you behold me it shall be in another form, not to predict your fate, but to witness it."

As he said these words, with the solemn sadness of human feeling, he slowly retreated. The unhappy young man was stung to madness. For a moment all was mist and cloud around him. When he raised his eye again the stranger was scarce visible in the dark distance. With a cry of despair, Ippolito rushed after him; in a moment he was at the extremity of the passage. Here several others branched off, losing themselves in the darkness. In none of them could the stranger be traced by sight or sound. The very light he bore had disappeared. It was impossible that in a few moments he could have traversed passages of such length; but Ippolito had long since ceased to judge of him by the measure of man, and now plunged into the passage immediately opposite him with the blindness of desperation. No object was visible as he glided along but the hoary and frowning arches of the vault; no sound was heard but the echoes of his steps, half-heard in the thick, damp air.

He had proceeded with a rapidity that left him no time to think of the distance he had traversed, till he was checked by actual weariness, and then perceived, for the first time, that of these winding passages there seemed to be no end. His mind was in too tumultuous a state to recognise this circumstance further than as it was connected with the length or difficulty of the pursuit. He was like a man who, waking from a fearful dream, seems still

to hold conference with forms of fantasy, peoples darkness and vacancy with shadowy crowds, and is scarce recalled to the objects of life by discovering that all around him is solitary and silent. It was this deep stillness, this interminable darkness, that first checked Ippolito in his pursuit. The stranger, his appearance and his words, seemed to him as a vision, a shadowy imagery that floated on the vapours of the vault. That he could have disappeared thus suddenly and entirely, was a contradiction to his actual presence; and Ippolito, almost distrusting his senses, began slowly to look round him to discover some means of extrication from this maze of passages.

From the moment he looked around him with this object, the length and darkness of the vault became intolerable. He would have been delighted to discover the slightest change in his progress; he would have been delighted to observe the walls more rugged and fractured, or the ground more uneven.

At length the objects around began evidently to assume a different aspect. Large masses of stone, rude and dark, projected from the walls and roof as if they would crush the passenger. Around some of them Ippolito observed dusky and stunted weeds were entwined, and once he thought a pale reflection wandered through a chasm over his head, as if light was stealing on him from the world above. Still his progress appeared endless.

He now walked on with steady swiftness, not admitting the suggestions of the hour and place, to overshadow his mind or benumb his exertions. Moving with the rapidity of one who was approaching a definite object while his eye vainly hung on the darkness to discover one, sometimes stung with an impulse to return, he would pause till the perplexity of the passages bewildered his brain in the effort to retrace them. Thus he passed on, dreading to look behind, and scarcely hoping as he looked onward. In this state of mind he suddenly found his progress checked by a wall that terminated the passage. Neither door nor window was perceptible in it. He examined it with his lamp, and at length discovered a grating that, almost decayed with rust, ran for a considerable length in the wall parallel to the ground. From its form and direction Ippolito conjectured it had been a part of a door, that was now enclosed in the wall.

Here was something like a means of escape, though, in other circumstances, it would rather have resembled an obstruction; but Ippolito, with his natural impetuosity, believed that nothing could resist his strength, stimulated by danger, and already felt himself liberated from this dungeon of famine and darkness. As he laid down his lamp for the purpose of examining the bars, he perceived through them a light, so faint and remote that he almost believed it a star. As he gazed on it it became more distinct, and he at length perceived it was a light in motion, though by whom it was borne or through what space it was impossible to discover. As it flung a tremulous and misty gleam through the thick air, he could see, after some time, a flight of steps at a vast distance, that wound beyond the sight, and of which partial fragments appeared through chasms at a still greater, feebly tinted with the moving rays of the light. And now, as it advanced down the steps, he could see it was borne by a tall, dark figure, who preceded another still more obscure, bearing in his arms something that was enveloped in white. They descended from a vast height at the extremity of a vault, over whose extent the torch as it approached threw a transient flash, without exploring it. As the vast masses of shadow varied with the motion of the torch, Ippolito thought he could discover objects that resembled the furniture of a place of sepulture scattered around the vault before him; but the light was too faint and partial to give them distinctness. The figures at the other extremity had now descended the steps and entered the vault. One of them laid down his burthen for the purpose of adjusting it, and while the other held up the torch to assist him, the strong light that fell on his visage discovered the stranger. The other was in the habit of a monk.

He resumed his burthen, and was proceeding with it, when the stranger, producing a dagger, fastened it in the monk's girdle, pointing with appropriate gesture to the object in white, and giving him the torch he bore, retired up the steps, where Ippolito could see his dark figure gliding past the chasms through which they wound, and sometimes bending from them as if to mark the motions of his agent below.

By what means this mysterious being was present in every scene of horror and active in every purpose of mischief (for such the present appeared), filled Ippolito with new wonder.

He seemed to glide from place to place like the very genius of evil, with a dark suggestion for every mind and a dagger for every heart.

The monk proceeded with slow steps across the vault, till he was nearly under the grating where Ippolito stood. The paleness of guilt and fear was in his face. As he held the torch low to direct his steps over the broken pavement, Ippolito could distinguish it was strewed with the memorials of the dead. He stopped where the ground was recently disturbed, and a stone appeared half raised from it, and seating himself, while the torch burned on the ground, withdrew the covering from the burthen in his arms, Ippolito discovered a female form folded in a shroud, whose relaxed limbs and pallid face resembled those of a corse. The monk looked around, though not a sound was near, and then unsheathing the dagger surveyed it wildly.

Ippolito no longer doubted that the object in the shroud was living, though it seemed determined she should be so no longer. The monk now raised his hand tremulously, and half averting his face, seemed to wind himself up to the blow. Ippolito, in an agony of rage and horror, struggled with the barrier between them, and uttered a cry so terrible in the conflict, that the assassin, dropping the dagger, remained petrified with fear, his fixed and strong eyes not daring to seek the direction from whence the sound had issued.

Ippolito grappled with the iron in a frenzy of rage; bar after bar, loosened by age and shaken with supernatural force, gave way, the stones in which they were fixed yielded along with them, till an aperture was formed, through which Ippolito forced himself, and leaping downward a descent of which he did not feel the depth, burst into the cemetery. The monk, whether in the confusion of his fear, or determined to effect his purpose before Ippolito could descend, had struck at the female with his dagger, but with a hand so uncertain, that it scarce rased the skin; he then fled, bearing with him the torch, which, however, he extinguished in his flight, and fled up the stairs, his dark garments fluttering through the apertures above.

Ippolito supported the lady in his arms; he perceived that she breathed. The feelings that her beauty might have inspired were repelled by her helplessness and her danger, and Ippolito bent over her with solicitude merely fraternal. To escape from the cemetery was the first object of safety: but to do this it was neccessary to wake his companion, and procure some information from her; for he had no knowledge of the place or of the direction to which the steps might lead. All attempt, however, to wake her was in vain. "This is not the sleep of nature," said Ippolito, "some pernicious means have been employed to reduce her to this state." He looked around him in consternation; the steps at the other extremity of the vault appeared the only mode by which he could escape from it; the rest were buried in shapeless darkness. The lamp, which he had left in the place from whence he had descended, threw a faint and shadowy light from above, which threatened every moment to expire. There was no time to balance means and expedients. He raised the lady in his arms, and pursuing the direction the monk had taken, began to ascend the steps. He looked around in vain for direction or assistance; the steps were broken and irregular, and but for the dim light that still issued from the lamp at the other extremity of the vault had been utterly dark.

Ippolito knew not whither they led—it might be into the very centre of danger; but no choice of directions was left him, no other means of flight were visible. As he still ascended, wondering at his own safety, he could distinctly hear the steps of the assassin retreating before him, of which the sound was sometimes lost in the echo of doors closing, and in the rush of wind that accompanied their opening. The light that still burned in the vault was now too remote to afford him asistance; he saw it but at intervals as it twinkled through the chasms; but above him a light, almost as faint, issued through an opening. Several steps were yet to be surmounted; he collected his declining strength, and with one vigorous bound reached the summit of them.

Pausing for breath, he now looked upward; the light issued through a trap-door in the roof, which the monk, in his flight, had neglected to close. Part of his habit, which still clung to it from the struggle of his fears in effecting his escape, assisted Ippolito to ascend through it with the only arm he had at liberty; the other supported his still insensible burthen.

On emerging from it, he looked around him—he was in a cloistered passage, that appeared to belong to some ecclesiastical building. Through the windows, dim and few, a faint moonlight was poured on the checkered floor, the clustering pillars, and the pointed arches

of the roof. Far to the left, Ippolito thought he could still distinguish the dark figure of the monk as he flitted along, though his steps were no longer audible; and still further, a gleam, as of distant lamps, trembled through the obscurity, warning Ippolito to shun the direction, where, as there were probably inhabitants, there was danger. With only this conjecture to direct him, he immediately turned to the right. The passage terminated in a door feebly secured; but as Ippolito laid down the lady, to force back the bolts, he looked behind him with an eye of wonder, to mark was there no sound of pursuit or of danger following them. Exhausted as his strength was, he found some difficulty in removing the fastenings of the door; it opened on a covered walk, through whose pillars, that bore the form of cloisters, he beheld a garden, on which the moonshine flung its rich and tremulous flood light. On Ippolito panting from the vapours of a dungeon and torches, no object could have such sudden power of refreshment and renovation as the beams of the moon and the breezes of night.

As he supported his companion, he perceived with delight that the current of the air had recalled her spirits; she spoke not, but her limbs heaved, and her eyes unclosed, though without a ray of intelligence. As he now hastened with her through the vaulted walk, he distinguished all the features of the building to which the passages were attached. The high tufts of pine, and larch, and cypress, concealed the lower parts of the fabric; but above them he could see the row of small conventual windows, with the antic carvings of the battlements above; at their extremity the great staircase window, stained with a thousand colours, that gave their rich romantic tingings to the moonbeams and the trees that waved around it; beyond, features still more characteristic of the structure appeared; the niched and figured walls, the angles of the buildings surmounted with crosses of grey marble, and, further still, the spire of the convent, rich with the fantastic profusion of Gothic embellishment.

As he still gazed, though he hastened onward, he could see tapers gleaming in different parts of the building; and once he thought he beheld a figure passing among the shade at the opposite extremity of the garden. The walk which he had traversed by this time terminated in a portico, whose light pillars were connected by trellis-work, and mantled over with luxuriant shrubs; he crossed it, and beheld before him an aperture in the garden wall, whose fragments lay scattered around, through which he beheld the open country in all the magic of moonlight. He darted through it with an impulse which annihilated weariness and fear, and found himself on a rising ground, whose gradual slope, skirted with tufts of arbutus and magnolia, led to the brink of a stream whose waters reflected the turrets of the convent. Ippolito hastened to the bank, and depositing his unconscious charge beside it, sprinkled her with water, and unfolded her vesture to the air.

While she slowly recovered her intelligence and speech, Ippolito gazed on her form, lovely even in the semblance of death. Her long dark hair that fell over her face and bosom, like the foliage of the cypress over a monumental marble, informed him she was not a religieuse; yet the building from which he had borne her was evidently a convent. Her first emotions on recovery, which were terror and surprise, as Ippolito had expected, he endeavoured to calm by the most respectful assurances of safety and protection, delivered in a tone so humble and soothing, as inspired her with a confidence her strange circumstances opposed in vain. When at length her perceptions became clear, and her language collected, Ippolito supplicated her to inform him by what means she had been involved in a situation so strange as that from which he had rescued her; of which, however, he took care to suppress the circumstances he judged too terrifying to be repeated to her.

At the mention of the cemetery and the convent the lady shuddered; and apparently too much agitated to answer his inquiries, fell at his feet, and, with a torrent of tears, avowed her innocence and her helplessness, and implored him to protect her from the horrors prepared for her by the persecutions of mysterious enmity, leagued with the oppressions of religious cruelty.

Her appeal was made in a language now little understood—the language of chivalry; of which no other ever possessed the power when addressed by a beautiful and helpless woman, to a young man noble and brave. Even at that period this language was much disused; and though Ippolito felt its energy in every fibre of his heart, yet he could easily observe that the manners and conceptions of the lady were utterly remote from those of ordinary life. He raised, and assured her, with impressive fervency, that while he possessed a weapon, or an

arm to wield it, no power should molest her; that he would defend her with the zeal of a lover, and protect her with the purity of a brother.

He then, while he conducted her along the bank of the stream, casting around his eyes in quest of some means of escape, of safety, or concealment, again implored her to explain the circumstances that had led to his discovering her.

The lady shrunk from the familiarity of a conference. Her timidity faltered in every accent, and shivered in every limb. She scarce accepted the assistance necessary to support her steps, and in vain endeavoured to raise her eyes to his, and discover if they confirmed the confidence his words inspired.

"I ought to trust you," said she; "nay, I must trust you; for I am destitute and defenceless; but if you are indeed a cavalier of honour, as your demeanour and voice bespeak, conduct me to some matron-relative, some female protector; and, till then, pity and forgive the fears of one timid by nature and by habit—fears that scarce give me breath to thank you for my life."

Ippolito was distracted by this appeal, which he could neither answer nor resist. "Lady," said he, "I am wretched to afford you protection so imperfect. I am a wanderer myself, and all the safety I can promise you is borrowed from your innocence and my own courage. I am, like you, a lorn and luckless being, without friend to appeal to or assistance to claim."

The lady was again in tears as he spake; but they seemed excited by a cause different from that which her last had flowed from. "It is his voice," said she, with impressive emotion; "it is his very language. Are all men unhappy? or are the brave and noble only persecuted? You, cavalier, are but the second I have ever seen, yet your language is exactly like his whom I would I had never, never seen."—"And why, signora?" said Ippolito; "is he unfortunate?"—"He said so."—"What is his name?"—"He told me never to disclose it; but that it was noble. I know but little myself of ranks or titles. Are you noble, cavalier?"—"There are few names more illustrious in Italy than that of Montorio," said Ippolito, forgetting his habitual caution in the pride of the moment. "Montorio!" shrieked the lady in the wildest tones of joy; "oh, then I am safe; I must be safe with you. He is a Montorio too; and though he is unfortunate, he is the bravest, the noblest, the loveliest——"—"What—what is his name?" said Ippolito, eagerly.—"His name is Annibal."—"Annibal! how came he here? He was at the castle of Muralto. Where is he now? Wherefore did he come? and where has he gone to?"—"I know not," said the lady, mournfully; "but he is gone where I never shall see him more. They who separated us will never permit us to behold each other again. Oh, that I knew where he was! I think, I almost think I could fly to him."—"Lady, all you utter is mystery; but there is, I fear, no time for anything but consulting our safety; if, indeed, there remain enough for that. The moon is setting; and I see tapers gliding about at the windows of the convent."—"And hark! by that chime the bell will toll for matins in an hour. They chant their matins an hour before sunrise. I see the vigil-lamp burning in mother Monica's turret. Oh, signor! where, or how shall we fly?"

To discover this Ippolito debated, if tumultuous anxiety can be called debate, in vain. His horse he had left behind him at Bellano, to which he knew not even the direction. Of the country into which he had emerged, after a subterrene passage, he could not be supposed to know anything; and his companion, though a resident in it, was equally ignorant. All she could inform him was that she had heard in the convent Puzzoli was at no great distance from it. This, though contrary to Ippolito's topical conjectures, gave him, nevertheless, some definite object to pursue, though it supplied no means of attaining it.

As they wandered along the bank in quest of some track that communicated with that they intended to pursue, they descried a small boat that was moored in a thick bed of rushes and watery weeds, and fluctuated lightly on the tide of the stream. "This is fortunate!" exclaimed Ippolito; "we shall be safer from discovery on the water, and shall probably reach some obscure fishing-hut in the windings of the river, where it will be easy to procure assistance without suspicion or delay.

The lady's reluctance to venture in a bark that had only one oar to navigate it was overcome by her more immediate fears; for at that moment a sound was heard which she believed was that of [illegible] issuing from the convent. Ippolito, who thought otherwise, concealed what he thought, [illegible]*ravated terrors* of his companion should render her unable to proceed. They

hastened through the willows and osiers that hung over the bank against which the bark was beating; but as Ippolito was reaching for the oar his companion called to him to observe an extraordinary appearance in the trees, which suddenly seemed to bend towards the river, and then retire again, while their branches quivered with a strange vibration. Ippolito looked up for the confirmation of his fears, and at the same moment the convent bells rung out a quick and terrible peal, and its spire and turrets rocked with a motion perceptible in the reflection of the water.

The lady, screaming with horror, clung to Ippolito, who combining, in the moment, calm reflection with the fullest sense of danger, assured her they would be safer on the water.

As she yet hesitated in the distraction of fear, Ippolito sprung into the boat, and extending his arms, implored her to embark while yet the ground supported her; but, as she attempted to follow him, the stream suddenly receding, flowed backward to its source with such rapidity, that Ippolito, when he recovered his sight, no longer knew the banks between which it was flowing. Around him all seemed in motion; the shrubs, the trees, the rocks, gliding past him with the undulating swiftness of a fluid; while, before him, the tide on which he floated, separating from that below it, left the bed of the river black and bare, heaving up as if the waters from beneath were rushing upward with wreathed heaps of foam that sparkled to the meteorous and misty sights with which the air was filled.

Amid the tumultuous sounds of mischief and terror that now arose on every side, he listened with feeling agony for the voice of the unfortunate female from whom he had been severed; but all power of discrimination was lost in another agitation of the river, which rushed into its former current with a velocity that left every known object behind it.

As he was borne along, Ippolito could see the turrets of the convent, of which he knew not whether the rent and tottering appearance was owing to the vibration of the air, or to the real injury they had sustained; but no vestige of his companion remained. The ground on which he had stood appeared to be converted into a marsh, in which were only seen the upturned roots of the willows and osiers nodding where their branches had waved a moment before.

The confusion was now general. Amid the concussion of rocks, the crash of buildings, and the hollow and tumultuous rushing of the earth, Ippolito could distinguish a thousand piercing tones of human distress, more terrible than all; the objects from which they issued he was spared the sight of, but every murmur of inarticulate terror was associated with the images of social or individual calamity in his imagination. He was still borne on with irresistible rapidity, till a third concussion checked the current with a shock so violent that Ippolito was obliged to grasp the stern of the boat for safety. The stream moved to and fro with uncertain undulation, while a deep murmur trembled beneath its waters, and eddying whirls of a blackish hue boiled upon the surface, spirting out globes of foam and sand, and bodies from the river's bed—then all sunk and subsided: the river resumed its natural course and level, and the slender bark glided on in safety between the banks, where solid and firm-seated substances had changed their places and forms with the levity of the atoms dancing in the wind. Ippolito now employing the oar, navigated his boat with all the dexterity in his power; but such still was the fluctuation of the river that he found himself unable to make either shore, the current still bearing the boat onward with a force he found it fruitless to contend with.

In spite of the recent and dreadful commotion he had witnessed, Ippolito found it impossible to withdraw his feelings from his own situation, so strange and forlorn. Of all who contended with the terrors of the elements, who had so little to fear from danger? for who had so little in life to hope or to pursue as he? The rived earth and the heaving flood had swallowed many a being that night, whose dying thoughts clung to life with the energy of hope and the fondness of desire, while they had spared one who would willingly have sheltered his head from the dark conflict that beset it, in the gloomiest grave their chasms presented.

The inextinguishable persecution of the stranger, the jealous malignity of society, the gloomy presages of an irresistible fatality, and that mistrust of our own power—that sinking of soul which anticipates the issue of long and sore temptation, began to settle over his mind, making it night within him. He had fled from Naples to avoid the presence of his mysterious tempter—he had met him in the solitude of deserts; he had pursued him, and

found him again, in circumstances of which no conjecture could furnish an explanation: they were separated again; but where might he not appear as suddenly as in the vaults at Bellano, or the cemetery of the convent? Distance of space or strangeness of hour were no obstruction to him; he might emerge, after a subterranean journey, at Puzzoli, or appear again at Naples. But one expedient presented itself; the same which, under similar circumstances, had been suggested to Annibal, that of flying to another country. To abide the fixed and regular assaults of the stranger was not tolerable even to thought, as its continuance would not only expose him to aggravated suspicion and danger, but to the greater mischief of familiarized guilt, at which he shuddered, for he had already begun to feel its influence.

The morning now began to pour a pale light through mist and fog on the landscape, and Ippolito looked back on the events of the night as on the business of years. That a few hours only had passed since his arrival at Bellano the preceding evening, and that into those few hours so many circumstances should have been compressed, almost exceeded the belief of reflection. As objects became stronger in the strengthening light, he discovered that the ravages of the late shock had been partial, and almost confined to that part of the country he had quitted; all around him seemed tranquil and uninjured. At a distance he beheld along the banks the huts of fishermen, scarce peering from among the tufts of the thick embowering trees that love a watery soil, and here and there the sails of their early barks flitting on the distant waves, like the pinions of the white fowl that skim their surface.

He now endeavoured to moor his boat on the shore opposite to that he had embarked from; and at length, though destitute of any skill in the use of the oar, succeeded. He debarked near a small cluster of huts, where he procured the necessary information with regard to the distance of Puzzoli, from whence he resolved immediately to return to Naples, and there make the necessary arrangements for passing into France. He had some faint idea of communicating his project to his brother Annibal, who seemed, like himself, the thrall of a wayward fate, but of whose wanderings he knew nothing, except that he was no longer at the castle of Muralto.

While in this hamlet, a horse was procured for him with much difficulty. His soiled, though splendid dress, and his mingled air of grandeur and distraction, excited a curiosity which he was compelled to appease by a plausible fabrication. As he endeavonred to utter this with fluency, a sting of anguish and proud shame darted through his whole frame: he remembered the stranger's prediction of his gradual immersion into vice and falsehood, and cursed the power that rendered an habitual violation of truth a part of his existence.

A thousand times, in the bold movements of an open heart, he was about to avow the truth, till he recollected that it might be attended with many evils, but not one advantage; and that, in his present progress, it was less necessary to consult his heart than his safety. He was informed, when, to repel inquiries, he began to inquire himself, that the concussion of the earth the preceding night had been felt but partially; that the river had undergone some extraordinary fluctuations; but that they were in daily terror of some great shock, such as those they had lately experienced usually precede; and that they had understood Vesuvius had been unusually turbulent for some time.—"And these are the omens of my return," said Ippolito, as he set out for Puzzoli.

The day was now advanced, and he pursued his way with the guarded and vigilant firmness of a man who is prepared for danger and interruption. He looked around with an eye which habitual fear had fixed in sternness, for the form of the stranger, or some other portentous shape, to rush across his path or glide dimly before him. His spirits seemed collected for their last effort; their energies were patient and stern, prepared to resist without violence, or to submit without desperation. Bodily weariness combined, with exhausted solicitude, to produce that deep and unbreathing stillness of soul, in which the acting powers are not extinct, but in repose. It was that frame into which every mind sinks after violent struggles and repeated defeats, and which usually precedes the last conflict it is able to support—it was that frame of which the force is indeed great, but the continuance doubtful; and the defeat, if there be one, total and decisive. It is too simple and absolute for variety of expedients, or renewal of contest; its impulse is single and collected; if it fail, it fails without hope and without effort—it was that frame in which he, whose intent was to deceive, would be least

willing to encounter his victim. It resists the visions of imagination—it questions even the representations of the senses, but its gloom is a balance for its strength and capacity; it doubts, it resists, but it despairs.

No object occurred in the way to Puzzoli; those that presented themselves on his approach to the city were in unison with his mind. It is a magnificent theatre of ruins. Antiquity has impressed her bold, gigantic charactery on their remains; she seems to sit among them like a sovereign, at whose feet distant ages and departed nations pour the tribute of their former greatness in their tombs, their temples, and their palaces. They lie scattered as around her footstool, in confused tints and shapeless grandeur. The great Domitian-way filled him with awe as he entered it; he felt the interests that agitated him disappear, like the vicissitude of the life of an ephemeron, at the bare thought of the myriads that had trodden that way since its erection, with thoughts as tempestuous as his own, who had passed away without leaving a trace in the history of mankind.

The temple of Jupiter Serapis and the ruins scattered around it, detained him till the heat of the day becoming intense, and operating with his sleepless and eventful night, of which he had only dozed a few moments in the turret-chamber at Bellano, he eagerly turned to the first inn the street presented, and, after a slight refreshment, threw himself on the bed and endeavoured to repair his strength for future encounters.

On awaking he found evening had arrived, and a secret and half unconscious dread of returning to Naples induced him to determine the remaining for that night at Puzzoli. He wished besides to discover whether the suspicions entertained of him were universal; if there was no place where he could appear in safety and innocence: whether the polished and enlightened habits of a city might not promise him protection from that superstitious malevolence to which he had been exposed in the more remote and savage parts of the country. He arose, therefore, and went out. but with dejection in his countenance and distrust in his heart. His eyes wandered vacantly over the many objects of curiosity and delight that encountered them, but hung with supplicating and intense solicitude on every human visage that passed him.

In an Italian city the great church and its avenues are usually the places of principal resort. As Ippolito slowly, and with agitation ill concealed, passed through one of those, two persons of ordinary appearance followed him at a distance he judged suspicious, till he observed they were conversing on indifferent subjects. "'Tis true," said one of them, "so extraordinary a circumstance has never occurred within the walls of Puzzoli; I could not have been persuaded of it had I not witnessed it. It outdoes all the miracles ever performed within the walls of church or convent—it is a few steps from the confessional, in the principal aisle, and just beneath the window which bears the blazonry of the Mirolo family." The other assented to the singularity of the circumstance, and added that he concluded no stranger could quit Puzzoli without visiting the great church and beholding with his own eyes so remarkable an object.

Ippolito, easily excited by the mention of the marvellous, and glad of the relief which an object of curiosity promised, repaired immediately to the great church. The antiquity and vastness of this awful structure scarce arrested his step as he entered it; he passed on to the principal aisle, and discovered a group collected round the spot the person had described. A boding of some dread, disastrous thing—some evil, unmeasured and unexplored, darkly hovered in his mind as he approached them. He resisted its effects with the feeling of a man who, conscious that something terrible is approaching him, and determined to meet and encounter it, receives the intimation of evil as an appropriate and natural presage, and is confirmed, not repelled by it.

As he advanced he observed they were gazing in different points of view on an inscription in the wall, of which the characters seemed to have been traced in blood. The group gave way as he drew near; he raised his eyes—the characters were large and legible. He beheld with horror the very lines which were inscribed over the portal of the subterrene chamber at Naples, which then surrounded with more terrible imagery he had scarce noticed, but of which he now recognised every impression with a tenacity that appeared to have slumbered in his mind till that moment. All caution, all power of reflection, forsook him at once. It seemed as if the lines were visible in their real character to him alone—to him

alone it seemed as they were charactered with lightning that seared his eyes. In the excess of ungovernable horror he turned around and fiercely demanded, "Who had done this—by whose means it had been placed there?" The spectators stared aghast, till one of much suavity of address advanced and inquired what had discomposed him. Ippolito, in the hoarse and breathless tones of passion, repeated the question. "That inscription," said the stranger, "has not lately been placed there."—"It must have been," said Ippolito, in the wildness of his emotions; "it is but lately that I beheld it in another place myself. Every movement around me seems to be conducted by witchcraft—how may this have been?"—"Your knowledge of the place where you last saw it, or imagined you saw it," said the stranger gravely, "may assist you to form a probable conjecture on the movements that brought it there without doubt."

Half recalled by this speech, yet still confused and distracted by this unexpected witness of his secrets, Ippolito made an imperfect apology for his vehemence, and added, "That the sight of circumstances so extraordinary had disturbed him."—"They are indeed extraordinary," said the stranger.—"Are you then acquainted with them?" said Ippolito, relapsing and staring wildly at him—am I known even here?"—"The circumstances relating to yonder inscription are undoubtedly extraordinary," said the stranger; "but how far you are interested in them I cannot presume to say."—"I implore you to relate them," said Ippolito; "heed not me or my interrruptions; I am a wild, unhappy being; I am feverish from fatigue of body and mind; heed not what I may say, or how I may look as you repeat them. I am innocent—in spite of those damning characters, I am innocent." The stranger, half shrinking from his wild appealing glances, proceeded in his account.

"This cathedral church, signor, is of high antiquity, and frequently memorials of the classic ages, and perhaps of others more remote, have been found within its walls. The inscription before you"—(the stranger need not have referred to it, for Ippolito was unable to remove his eye from it)—"is of such remote antiquity, that it is supposed it was originally graven on the stone before the building was erected, as there is no tradition of its recording any event since that period; it is therefore concluded to have been a fragment of ancient stone, accidentally employed in the first construction of the church. There have been many conjectures on the subject of its meaning, but it is unfortunately in a language which the literati of Europe are utterly unable to recognise. The words you see are barbarous, though the characters are Greek. The most probable conjecture I have yet heard, is founded on the two last words, KOTS OMPIETS. Ancient authors have acknowledged that these words were employed in the Eleusinian mysteries; they have also admitted that they were words barbarous and unintelligible to those that used them, but were supposed to have some secret reference to the mysterious purposes of that institution. Is it not probable, therefore, that the whole inscription is the admonitory formula of the mysteries of which the words were admitted to be foreign, but of which the characters would in transcription be probably Greek, as those before us are?—but while the learned had their conjectures, the superstitious had theirs also. There was a tradition connected with these characters, that whenever the fate of a distinguished family in Naples was approaching the wall of the aisle of the great church of Puzzoli would weep blood. This was repeated from age to age, with the partial wonder of imperfect credulity, till lately, when a circumstance occured that revived its recollection.

"It was about a month past that a stranger, tall and closely muffled in a dark habit, arrived in Puzzoli, and immediately repaired to the great church. It was the time of vespers; the stranger planted himself opposite this inscription. The congregation assembled, vespers were performed, the congregation dispersed—the stranger stood unmoved!"—(The speaker, during his narrative, kept his eye intently fixed on Ippolito.)—"It was the vigil of St John the lesser; the service and offices were renewed every hour of the night, and mass was performed at midnight. Numbers of ecclesiastics came from other churches to assist, and the faithful were passing and repassing, at the different hours of service, the whole night; so that probably every inhabitant of Puzzoli had successively an opportunity of seeing this extraordinary person, who remained in one posture, silent and motionless, the whole night, gazing on the inscription. Towards matin service one of the lay-brothers, going to extinguish the lamps *which burned* dimly in the dawning light, observed as he passed through the aisle, that the

stranger had departed; and as he proceeded to replace the tapers which were nearly extinguished at the shrine yonder, he suddenly was heard to give a cry of horror, and exclaim, 'That the wall of the aisle was weeping blood!'—Several monks hastened to the spot. Whether they confirmed the lay-brother's report, I do not presume to say; but it is certain that, ever since that period those characters, which were before of the colour of the stone, have retained the appearance of blood.

"Such are the circumstances, signor, which you must acknowledge to be sufficiently extraordinary."—"Pardon me," said Ippolito, with a sudden and unnatural mildness of tone, "nothing to me appears extraordinary."—"You must then be conversant with such circumstances," said the stranger.—"Perfectly conversant—oh, there is no telling how familiar I am with them!" said Ippolito, with a frightful laugh.—"You will then gratify me by some conjectures on this singular subject," said the stranger.—"It is more than conjecture," said Ippolito, answering his own thoughts.—"Have you any idea of having seen the extraordinary personage I have described before?" continued the stranger.—Ippolito was silent.—"Can you form a conjecture where he is at present?" pursued the wily stranger.—"He is here," answered Ippolito, in a tone that transfixed him.—"Here!" repeated he, trembling and looking round.—"Yes, here," replied Ippolito, with eyes still fixed on the inscription—"see him," he murmured—"yes, I see him always: I see him now—I hear him; blindness cannot shut him out—I have lost myself, but I cannot lose him."

The stranger, who had at first raised his eyes in wonder at Ippolito's unqualified confessions, now examining his countenance, beheld it fixed in the fiery stare of madness. Improving this appearance, according to his own conceptions, into demoniacal possession, he retreated with the precipitation of fear, unnoticed by the wretched young man, who was utterly careless of the construction put upon the expression of his misery.

He continued for some time gazing vacantly on the wall, and at length sunk against it in helpless stupefaction; but it was a stupefaction merely of the senses. The operations of his mind were active and acute; he counted every drop of the tempest that was poured out upon him; as the lightning blazed around him, he seemed to dissect its fires with a prism, to concentrate its burnings, and measure their aggravated fury.

The prediction which he applied to his family, whose peace and honour would be for ever blasted by the deed he was tempted to perform—the appearance of the stranger (for he had but one archetype in his mind for all beings of mysterious appearance and agency)—and the obvious though inscrutable connexion between the characters on the wall and those he had seen in the vaults of the scene of blood at Naples, rushed on his mind with a force condensed and complicated, and, for a while, swept away all power of resistance.

He hung over them with his mental powers benumbed and impassive. He saw them, as it were, with a mental eye glazed and opaque, that can suffer a body to touch its very organ without feeling it. The intellectual frame, shocked by violence, had folded up its fine texture, and no further assault could compel it to a capacity of suffering. Real and proper absence of reason succeeded, substantial forms faded from before his eyes. He thought the persecuting stranger was again beside him, forcing into his hands a dagger, which he endeavoured to refuse. The stranger, with a terrible smile, desisted; then, retreating a step, held up the dagger, and pointing to the bloody drops which stained it, waved it over his head. The dead and crusted blood dissolved as he moved it, and dropped slowly on his face and hands; he shuddered in vision, and struggled to wake to free himself from the terrible imagery. He awoke, and felt it still—he started—looked around, his hands were be-dropped with blood, he touched it—it was warm; it flowed from his temples, which, as he fell against the wall, had been wounded by the pediment of a tomb, and now streamed with blood, unfelt. He wiped it away without a groan, and quitting the church, hasted back to his apartment at the inn.

Here he strode about for some time in agony of thought. The persecution that haunted him was aggravated tenfold by his personal feelings and character; too noble-minded for the bare admission of a criminal thought, and too impetuous for the slightest restraint on his actions or movements, he saw himself invested by the most noxious characters of a criminal, and circumscribed in every motion by his inexhaustible pursuer. He had contended, and his struggles had only wearied himself; he had fled, and his flight had been measured and accompanied; he had endeavoured to retire from the conflict in silence, and he had been roused

again to frenzy by fresh instances of the presence of his implacable tormentor. To sit down in sullen despair was equally hopeless. His pursuer was not content with negative malevolence, but contended with him when he resisted; he excited and goaded him when he was passive—he followed him in his motions, and he was present with him when he was at rest. There is no thought more overwhelming than this, it disarms the soul of every power of resistance, yet leaves it nothing to hope from submission. "Oh, that he were human," Ippolito exclaimed in the bitterness of his soul—"that he were an assassin, and I a lone and naked traveller in the depth of a mountain forest; that he were an inquisitor and I a prisoner in his grated and airless dungeon; that he were an earthly tyrant and I the meanest of his slaves who had incensed him, and stood before him surrounded by the ministers of torture—then I could measure the power I had to contend with, and prepare my own for resistance—then I could know exactly to what they could extend and where they must terminate; I could image to myself that point where exhausted cruelty could not compel another groan—where nature would mock at the impotence of power. Oh, that he were even of an order of beings above me, whose powers could be recognized and limited, then I might know how far his commission to punish might reach, and insult him with its imbecility. Definite misery cannot be intolerable to an immortal being. Though he pursued me with the rage of the dragon, I would yet know that the key of his pit was kept by an angel; though his commission were to last a thousand years, that thousand years would be to me but as yesterday. But how can I contend with an inaccessible enemy, whose power is undefined and whose duration is unimaginable? I know not yet if he be a man or demon. His goadings and suggestions drive me to frenzy; to resist them is becoming impossible, and to obey them is to devote myself to destruction, body and soul."

The echo of his loud and agitated voice at this moment coming to his ear, he suppressed it, and at the interval he thought he heard voices whispering at his door. He stopped and listened, for fear had made him suspicious of trifles. A voice then articulated, "This must be his apartment—that was his voice." After a moment's pause another whispered, "He is silent now—did you mark his words?" Several other sentences were uttered in suppressed tones, and he then heard steps retiring through the passage that led to his room.

He hastened to the window, and saw three persons of ordinary habits pass into the street. It was a dusky evening in the close of autumn; he could neither distinguish their persons nor their faces. He was recalled from his conjectures by the voice of his host, who, passing near the door, exclaimed, "I cannot conceive who they are, unless they may be ministers of the Inquisition! St Iago be my protector! the sight of them makes me tremble from head to foot." He then passed into a hall adjacent to Ippolito's room, where others were apparently assembled, and eagerly repeated his suspicions and his fears to them.

The whole company were in commotion. The name of the Inquisition operated like that of pestilence or the sword amongst them.—"Alas!" said the host, "what have I done that they should honour me with this visit?"—"Perhaps this visit is meant to some of your guests," said a strange voice; "do you know who is at present under your roof?"—"You are the only stranger," said the host; "and you, signor, look too like one of themselves to be in any dread of their visit."—"Are you sure of this?" said the other voice; "is there no stranger under your roof but me?"—"Santo Patrone," said the host, "sure enough there is a strange cavalier in the house, but he has remained in his chamber since he entered it, and I had quite forgotten him."—"Has he remained alone? that appears suspicious; you should observe him."—"Observe him! not for the world; I would not take the full of this room of gold and watch a heretic, a criminal of the Inquisition! How do I know but the very sight of him would make me as bad as himself?"—To this wise observation the other assented, apparently with a view of aggravating the fears of the simple host, which were now extreme and oppressive.—"Alas," said he, "what an age is this for good catholics to keep inns in! It was but lately an innkeeper at Celano, as innocent as myself, lodged a cavalier from Naples, a strange man, who, they say, never sleeps at night, and of whom things are told that would make the hair of a good catholic stand upright."—"Have a care," repeated the stranger; "that the same person be not within your walls at this moment."—"Jesu Maria forbid!" said the host, crossing himself.—"If he be under your roof you are answerable for his appearance," said the stranger.—"It cannot be he," said the host eagerly, vindicating himself

from the imputation "for these plain reasons——."—Here he enumerated several circumstances relative to Ippolito's appearance; every one of which tended to confirm what he meant to disprove.—"I tell you," said the stranger, exalting his voice, "he is within these walls. Look to him, as you will answer it to the most holy Inquisition."

For some moments after this terrible sentence the whole company seemed stunned into silence. Ippolito, partaking of their sensation, remained listening rather from an incapacity to exclude the sound than any positive effort of attention.

"Who was he that came among us?" said the host, at length, in a voice of fear. Every one alike disclaimed any knowledge of him. Some withdrew from the spot he had just quitted; others looked fearfully towards the door. All agreed that he had entered unperceived—that he had mingled in the conversation before they knew he was present—and that he had departed without sound or visible motion.

They then began to examine the few words he had uttered—to compare their descriptions of his appearance, and their ideas of his real character and purposes, till, almost petrified with fear, they scarce ventured to raise their eyes to each other's visages, or to trim the lamp, which the imagination of each had tinged with vivid blue.

At length their consultations took a less abstract turn, and they jointly determined on the expediency of apprizing the holy office of the character of their guest. But Ippolito, obeying the impulse of nature and despair, with a bold and rapid movement, threw open the door between the rooms, and stood amongst them. The group at this time were the host, the females of his family, their confessor, the monk of an adjacent monastery, and some Campanian travellers.

"I am Ippolito di Montorio," said he, with a disarming voice; "but I am not the monster you dread." In the energy of the preceding moment he had conceived an appeal of resistless strength and eloquence, but his powers of utterance failed him. He tried in vain to collect the scattered images; they swam darkly before him; their force only oppressed and stifled him. He stood with extended arms, and a form whose expression, with the female party at least, amply supplied the place of elocution.

The party, astonished and dismayed, remained silent, stealing, at intervals, a glance of doubt and fear at the spot where he stood. Their silence chilled and repressed the unhappy Ippolito. With violence he could have contended, and with remonstrance he could have reasoned; but what was to be done with hopeless silence?

At length the flush of his first impulse utterly fled; and his spirits dispersed and weakened, in a faltering voice he addressed the host, entreating him not to accredit the wild and unauthentic suspicions of the vulgar, nor lightly to admit charges so terrible against a being to whom no means of purgation were allowed, and against whom no definite proof could be urged.

His ardour augmented by what he mistook for the stillness of attention, he proceeded to call Heaven to witness his innocence; he attested every saint that he was a firm believer, and a good catholic. "This is, indeed," said he, "the time for me to cleave to God, when all his creatures desert and abhor me." He told them his sufferings arose from a dark and untold cause that was locked within his own breast. "But those," said he, "who do not solicit confidence are not therefore to be excluded from compassion."

He was proceeding with the increasing warmth which our own vindication seldom fails to inspire, when he was checked by a deep and universal murmur of detestation. Wizard, infidel, and "Eretico damnabile," were echoed from every mouth. "I implore you," said Ippolito, struggling with emotions that made utterance painful, "to retract those horrible words, or at least to reflect on them. Be not so inconsistent in inhumanity; be not so wanton in persecution. Did I possess the powers you ascribe to me? would I stand here to plead for reputation and honour to such a tribunal? Would I supplicate beings from whom I never expected to hear a sound myself but in supplication? Would not my resentment shiver you to atoms? Would not my sport scatter you to the winds? Would I not myself mount on their wings, and fly to regions where persecution would not reach me?"

"Stop your ears!" cried the host in horror; "he is uttering some spell. He talks of the winds as familiarly as of a horse. Signor, whoever you are, I implore you to quit my house. Only quit it before the roof falls on us, and then you may mount the first wind you meet, and ride to the devil on it, too, if you like, with my best prayers for your speedy arrival."—"Oh!"

said Ippolito, descending, in his distress, to the plainest language, "talk not, I conjure you, of driving me from your house. I have often afforded shelter, but never asked it before. The protection of your roof is but little for a son of the house of Montorio to beg; but misery is humble. I feel, if I am driven from your doors, no other will be opened to me; it will be the sealing of my fate; I shall cease to have strength for any further conflict; or spirits for any further appeal. Will you be the first to raise the outcry of savage pursuit—to blast the victim of imaginary infection? I claim the common privileges of a traveller. I am spent and overworn with weariness. Many days have passed since I have sat at a domestic board, or stretched myself on a quiet bed. My wanderings have been restless and incessant."

"So they may well have been," said the monk, who thought it time for him to interpose. "Fac, ut illi similes sint rotæ. Sit via eorum cæca ac periculosa, angelus autem Domini profliget eos."

"Do not," said Ippolito, with patience almost exhausted, "do not overwhelm me with this blind and sottish severity. Ye have but one standard to judge of criminals by, and ye make it a bed of Procrustes, to all alike. Ye have put one formula of execration, and you fulminate that without thought or discrimination. Is there no difference between offenders? Are there no gradations in evil? Is suspicion to operate like conviction—and is conviction itself to exclude humanity? Do you reckon as guilty alike, the stubborn villain, from whose barred and brazen side your shafts rebound as they would from a rock, and an erring brother, to whom the bare glance of a reproachful eye is as iron that enters into his soul? Do you reckon lost alike, him who has gone down so deep into the gulf, that to follow would be to sink along with him; and him who yet shivers on the verge, and who can be pushed from his hold by despair?"

"If you repent, and make expiation for your enormities," said the monk, "the church is an indulgent mother, and will absolve you on your confession and penitence."

"And is it then impossible to procure the privileges of humanity but at the price of pouring out your whole soul to men who can neither judge of its sufferings nor heal its breaches; who will dismiss you with the cold, professional look of the Levite, but sprinkle neither oil nor wine upon you? Is it not possible that a man may retain his integrity, and yet cherish some secret he cannot disclose? Can you not believe him possessed of resolution to bear up against some sore and inward trial, unless he forfeits that resolution by detailing its exercise? Is there no compassion for the shame of suffering? Is there no garment for the writhings of a naked and wounded mind, to whom the very air and light of day are torture, and who feels it is exposed, not to compassion, but to curiosity? To complain is, to me, hateful and uncongenial; but to complain to the incredulous, to the unpitying, to those who debate whether you are a criminal or a madman, while they listen to you—must, must this be done? Or may I not be reckoned a fellow creature?"

"By my holy order," said the monk, "he blasphemes the church and her sacraments!"—Ippolito turned from him indignantly. "You," said he to the females, "have the habits of women; oh! have you not the hearts?—judge of me in the gentleness of your natures. I am not what cruel and bigoted men have told you. I am like yourselves. I differ only from others in my sufferings. I am no wizard, no sorcerer, no heretic. How can you credit such absurdities of one so helpless, so supplicating, so persecuted? I am like yourselves. I have, like you, a dread of persecution, a hatred of oppression, a reputation to be blasted, a peace to be destroyed, feelings to be wrought to frenzy. Feel these hands I hold out to you; they are warm with life and feverish blood. Put your hand on my side—feel my heart—it is beating, it is bursting with agony. I would it were broken this moment!" Overcome by anguish, he staggered—he fell backward. A few burning tears fell from his eyes; but they neither gave him relief nor the power of utterance. "*Christo benedetto!*" said the women, bursting into tears—"how beautiful he is! Ah! *madre di Dio*, what a pity!"—"It is no pity," said the monk, "Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. I have seen him more than once myself in the shape of a white pigeon."

Ippolito, swallowing down his tears, sprung with a convulsive impulse to the knees of an old man who had hitherto sat silent, and whose mild and venerable aspect seemed to announce an exemption from the resentments of nature.—"Father, father," said he, "your looks promise me confidence and compassion. You are already almost an inmate of that world where are-

judice and passion are unknown. By your white hairs, I adjure you, if you have a son like me, believe me, acknowledge me, commisserate me. I am innocent, I am innocent; and to leave that impression on such a heart as yours, would be well purchased by the suspicion and abhorrence of a thousand such as those around us."

The old man, who had vainly struggled to free himself from Ippolito's earnest hold, at ength exclaimed with vehemence, "If I had a son like you, I would pray to heaven to make him childless. My grey hairs are defiled by the appeal you make to them. I have lived three score and eight years, and I had thought to have closed my eyes in peace; but the sight of you has prevented it. I have lived too long, since I have lived to see you. I had heard of such wretches before. They were old, and withered, and miserable; and might almost be forgiven for resorting to forbidden sources, to seek from them what nature and this world denied them. But you—oh! you, so young, so beautiful, so exalted—what temptation, what excuse, what plea could the destroyer of souls prevail with, to make you seal your ruin, body and soul? Release me; my heart is breaking to see you look so. Why have you not the visage of a fiend, as well as the spirit? I might grow a heretic myself, looking at you. Let me go; my blood curdles at your touch. I said I had lived too long; but I will not think so till I have heard of your terminating your horrid existence in the dungeons of the Inquisition."

The old man spake with the energy of virtuous abhorrence. He shook in every limb, and marked himself with the cross wherever Ippolito had touched him; but his failing voice bespoke a lingering of humanity, which his zeal contended with in vain.

Ippolito retreated from his last appeal. The fountain of his heart seemed dried up and sealed. The vitals of humanity were parched and withered within him. He extended his arms and looked upward. "Then I am outlawed of nature. I am divested of the rights of being. Every ear is deaf, and every heart is iron to me. Wherever I tread the sole of my foot dries the streams of humanity. I have done; but you, oh, you! may you one day know what it is to knock at the human heart, and find it shut! May you know what it is to fly from the hell-hounds of superstition, and hear their howl double on you at every winding! May you feel with me the malignity of men united with that of demons to chase and scatter you! —and may the sheiter to which you fly, drive you forth, as you have driven me, to despair!" He rushed out of the house, and ran wildly into the street, reckless of expected danger, and only seeking to subdue the sense of anguish by impetuosity of motion.

"Heaven be praised," said the monk, "his smooth words did not seduce us to listen to him! He showed his cloven foot, departing, however."—"I saw no cloven foot," said the host, rather angrily, "he went away to my mind just like a cavalier in a passion."—"Just," said the women, "he did not go away a bit like a sorcerer; there was no blue flame or earthquake; nor did he carry away a stone out of the wall with him."—"How!" said the monk, "will you presume to say he went out of the house like a catholic?"—"To be sure he did," said the host, "and after all I shall have nothing to tell of to-morrow in the town."—"His presence has infected you," said the confessor, "will you deny that he was followed by a track of sulphur, in which you might see imps flitting up and down like motes in a sunbeam?"—"Holy father, be not incensed," said the wife, "I do think there is indeed a smell of sulphur."—"I begin to perceive it myself," added the host. "Let us pray," said the monk, &c. &c. &c.

Ippolito traversed the streets with rapid steps. Evening was not wholly closed, but he could perceive that his presence everywhere anticipated the solitude of night. Children fled from their sports as he passed, and the few passengers he met darted eagerly into another direction. The influence of the stranger seemed to surround him like the spell of an enchanter, converting every human being he met into a silent shadow, and making him a shadow to them.

It was then he felt the extent of his misery—to be alone on earth—to forget the language of man—to lose the vital functions of nature—to be amerced of his humanity—to find "those cords of man" by which the human race are drawn together, relaxed and severed by a power that was not death—to feel, like the Mexican victims, his heart, the seat of life and sensation, taken out and held before his eyes, yet panting—to die mentally, yet still feel the burdens and sorrows of the flesh. A deep and utter desolation shadowed over his soul. He loathed life, but knew not how to die.

He still continued to walk, from mere hopelessness of rest or shelter. Night arrived. He loitered on, without approaching a door or addressing an individual. The blast scattered his dark hair—his feet began to falter, when three persons, suddenly surrounding him, commanded him, in the name of the most holy Inquisition, to follow them.

This was expected, yet he felt thunderstruck when it actually arrived. To an Italian ear that name speaks unutterable things. It is associated in their imagination with every idea of horror and ruin—eternal confinement—undiscovered oblivion—solitary and languishing death; and all shadowed over with a mist of superstitious fear, such as the fancy believes to hover round the cave of an enchanter, and which is suggested by the peculiar mysteriousness of the proceedings of that tribunal.

Ippolito looked wildly on the men, and half drew his sword, but after a moment's conflict folded his arms and followed them. At this period the Inquisition was not so fully organized in its several departments and motions, as it has since been. Its principal seats were then Rome and Naples. In the other cities it only maintained agents, who, with the help of the secular arm, observed, apprehended, and dispatched their several offenders to the principal seats of the office. The present agent at Puzzoli was a Signor Giberto Angellini, a man of intelligence and humanity.

There was no regular prison in the town, but the number of suspected persons had lately increased so much, that they had been compelled to repair and fortify an ancient structure that had formerly been a Roman fort, and which stood on a mole on the western shore, whose waves beat against its hoary bastions, murmuring sounds of woe to the sufferers within.

Thither Ippolito was conducted. At another hour his mind would have thrilled and dilated with awe, as the dark features of his prison emerged to his view in the windings of his long approach to it. The rude, gigantic portal, of a form elder than what was called ancient centuries back; the long perspective of arched passages over which the torches of his conductors threw a flaring and shadowy light, fringing with deep red the tufts of weed and dusky grass that wound through their clifts, and showing the bold irregular shapings and fractures of their unhewn walls, while often, as he passed among them, he caught bright glimpses of the distant sea, quivering in the moonshine; or of the sky, whose deep clear blue was strongly marked by the black indentures of the walls, whose edges it spangled with stars finer than points of dew; the dark habits, the gliding steps, and the muffled visages of his guard, giving almost a visionary solemnity to their progress.

They arrived at length at a larger and more regular apartment of the building. Ippolito observed in its dark extent grated windows and arched doors that bore proofs of modern repair. His guard here, bowing profoundly, resigned him to a person of solemn appearance, who advanced from the opposite extremity of the hall, and silently lighting a torch at a lamp, suspended from an iron chain in the roof, beckoned to Ippolito to follow him.

They began to ascend a flight of stone steps. The cold wind, issuing from a thousand crevices, chilled Ippolito; yet he saw neither door nor window. The ascent seemed endless. His conductor glided on in unbreathing silence. Ippolito stopped. The man stopped also, by way of inquiring without words, the reason of his delay. "I listen," said Ippolito, "for the relief of some sound beside the echo of my own steps." The man paused for a few moments, as if to convince him no such relief was to be expected, and then glided on as before. They now reached an arched passage where guards, fully accoutred, stalked backwards and forwards, in silence also. They bowed to the person who conducted Ippolito, but at him did not even direct a casual glance. The sullen habits of their office seemed to have extinguished all human feeling, even curiosity, the last that might be supposed to linger within the walls of an Inquisition.

His conductor now led Ippolito through a dark, narrow chamber to another more spacious but equally gloomy; and lighting a lamp attached to the wall, and pointing to a pallet scarcely distinguishable in a distant recess, silently disappeared. Ippolito threw himself on it, and reflecting that the influence of the stranger was excluded here, sunk into sleep.

He was three days in confinement before he was summoned to attend the Inquisition. During that period, the solitude and silence of his prison—the noiseless step and mute visage of his guard—the few and monotonous sounds that reached him from without—the toll of the bell—the chimes of the night—the whispered watchword of the guard—and the hoarse

dashing of the sea at the foot of his tower—had tranquillized his mind, and poured into it a still and patient melancholy, not destitute of vigour, but utterly distinct from sternness.

On the third day he was conducted to Signor Angellini's presence. Through the passages he traversed, he perceived daylight gradually diminishing, from the thickness of the walls and the narrowness of the grated apertures. It was almost twilight when they reached a low door. One of the guard touched it with a staff he held, and it opened. Ippolito was led into a room, hung with black, and lighted by a lamp. The inquisitor and his secretary were seated at a table at the upper end. The guard withdrew. There was little of the grim formality of an inquisitorial examination observed, save that Ippolito was seated opposite the agent, the prisoners of that tribunal not being permitted to stand during the examination.

When the inquisitor raised his eyes, he seemed involuntarily struck with Ippolito's form and expression; and surveyed his wild woe-tinted countenance, with a feeling Ippolito thought proscribed within those walls. "Be so good, cavalier," said he, "as to inform me whether you bear the name of Montorio?"—"I did not know," said Ippolito, "that it was part of the business of this office to inquire the name."—"In this case it is necessary," observed the inquisitor, as part of the depositions laid before us refer to the actions of a person named Montorio, and part state you are that person; this point, therefore, requires the first consideration".

Ippolito had heard much of the subtlety of the proceedings of this tribunal. He determined to make no concessions he could avoid, and to give no information he could withhold. "If your information be accurate," said he, "you need not inquire my name; if it be not, it becomes you to seek from a more authentic source. I shall not disclose my name."—"I must then proceed as if you had," said the inquisitor; "that is the rule of our office in such cases; but I must observe, few are thus anxious to conceal a name they have done nothing to dishonour."—"To dishonour it," said Ippolito with dignity, "would be to avow it in such a cause; to prostitute it to the refutation of absurd and malevolent charges."—"You are then acquainted with the nature of the charges urged against you?" said the inquisitor with surprise. "How is it possible I should be ignorant of them?" said Ippolito; "they assail me from every mouth, at every step. The solitude of deserts and the sanctity of churches protect me in vain; they pursue me in society; they haunt me alone; they have poisoned my existence; they have subverted my peace, almost my reason."—"If you were conscious of innocence," said the inquisitor, "why did you not apply to the church or the secular power? No unoffending person can be thus persecuted with impunity in a civilized country."

Ippolito gnawed his lip, and was silent. He perceived that the stranger, with the malignity and art of a demon, had snared him into his favourite pursuit; that he had involved him in guilt, which, to conceal, was no longer possible, and to avow, in such a country, was fatal.

"Were you ever in Puzzoli before?" said the inquisitor. "Yes."—"Did you witness any remarkable object on your arrival there?" Ippolito hesitated. The question was repeated. "I saw an extraordinary inscription in the aisle of the great church."—"What was the reason of the emotions you betrayed on beholding it?"—"The emotion of surprise was too natural and general to require an individual to assign reasons for it; many others expressed the same, whom I do not see here."—"You were observed to use some remarkable words."—"Were my words then noted by casual observers?" said Ippolito, shocked and overwhelmed at this discovery. "Those around you were not casual observers," said Angellini; "your motions and your expressions have, from the moment of your quitting Naples to the present, and for some preceding time, been in the possession of the holy office."

At this terrible intimation Ippolito sunk back in his seat and hid his face with his hands. He felt like a man who, believing he has eluded the pursuit of an assassin, traverses a long and dreary path with hope; and just as he approaches its termination, perceives that his pursuer has only sported with his destruction—that he has followed him step by step, and is prepared to spring on him as he reaches the last. The inquisitor seemed slightly affected by his appearance, but renewed the examination.

"Had you," said he, "ever beheld that inscription before?" Ippolito, within whom all power or impulse of resistance began to fail, admitted he had. "When, and under what circumstances?" said the inquisitor. Ippolito hesitated, but was too dispirited to construct an

answer, till the question was repeated with solemnity. "Ask your informer that," he replied, "and his answers will betray another victim to the holy office; his confession will unfold a horrible tale."—"He has already unfolded it," said the inquisitor. "What! is it possible that he has surrendered himself to the judgments of the church? Has he disclosed the mystery of his iniquity? Is it possible that a vindication awaits me?"—"Of whom do you speak?" said the inquisitor; "there appears some mistake here."—Of whom!" said Ippolito, with vehemence; "of the evil one that haunts and troubles me; of him who has blasted my existence—who has defiled my conscience with horrid thoughts—who has hunted me from society, and chased me into the talons of the Inquisition."—"You speak then of one I am a stranger to," said the inquisitor; "my informer was an individual of unquestionable innocence."—"It is impossible, said Ippolito, "he could not have obtained his information if he were; none but agents were witnesses of the transaction."—"Have a care," said the inquisitor. "If it be impossible that a witness could be innocent, what are we to think of you?"—"You confound, you overwhelm me," said Ippolito; "is this an examination? I say, whatever guilt is supposed to be attached to me the person who informed you of it must partake; for where I was an agent he was the same; if he is innocent, I must be innocent also."—"You accuse me unjustly," said Angellini; "I extort no concessions, I equivocate myself into no unhappy man's confidence; I desire to abide by the plain and direct meaning of your words. And to convince you of the candour of my proceedings, I give you to understand that the charges exhibited against you are of so important a nature, that nothing but the most irrefragable documents should substantiate or refute them; I have therefore compelled the personal attendance of the principal witnesses, who are not yet arrived. This I inform you of lest you should be terrified into a confession, on the usual apprehension instilled by inquisitors—that they are already in possession of everything which confession can inform them of. You have now time to arrange your thoughts, and prepare your defence. I only wished, by this private inquiry, to discover if you had any wish to be spared the shame of involuntary confession, and being confronted with positive testimony. You may retire; I lament your apparent obstinacy. I warn you—you have to do with a tribunal with whom the heroics of affected defiance will avail just as little as the sullen retreat of an universal and positive negation."

Touched by this open address, and wrung by the thought, that the only sentiment even the generous seemed to have for him was a doubtful compassion, Ippolito would have paused, and appealed, but it was too late; the guard, on a signal, unperceived but by themselves, advanced to reconduct him to his apartment, and the inquisitor and his secretary silently vanished in the obscurity of the chamber.

He was led back to to his solitary tower, where he had abundant leisure for the preparation the inquisitor had recommended to him, but he had now no resolution for it; his mind was weary with misery; his powers, weakened by continued sufferance, were now relaxed to that frame which, out of great events and ample ranges of view, selects only the recent and proximate points, and dwells on them with minute partiality. Of his various and eventful life, he only remembered and revolved his conference with the inquisitor. But by what means the stranger could reveal the transactions at Naples, without acknowledging himself as a principal, or any other person could obtain a knowledge of them, he conjectured in vain. Yet even this state of uneasy debility and helpless fear was not utterly without relief. The varying colours of the sky and aspects of the ocean, the wild scenery of rocks and ruins that indented the bold curvings of the shore, and the endless varieties their shapes and hues underwent, from the transitions of morn to noon, of evening to moonlight, with imperceptible gradations, too soft for the quaintest pencil or most curious eye to follow—all these were with him in his prison. The influence of the stranger could not change the eternal forms of nature, nor prevent their gleaming through the high grated window of his tower. At intervals, he even perused the fragments of Cyprian's strange story, which had been spared in the search he underwent on his entrance into the Inquisition.

As long as the faintest ray of light trembled over the water or the shore. Ippolito lingered at his casement, studiously confining his thoughts to external objects, pleased even to observe the distant tokens of involuntary sympathy that were paid to his situation or its imagined tenant; to observe the fishermen pausing on their oars, as they glided round the vast projecting buttresses that propped the rock on which his tower was perched, and shake their

heads, as they threw a scarce perceptible glance at its steep and impassable height. When the guard silently lit his nightly lamp, Ippolito, producing his manuscripts, would pore over them with unrelaxed attention, not to procure pleasure, but to exclude pain. Yet some of these excited his sympathy, exhausted as it was with personal claims. They marked out regular periods of life as well as passion, and therefore conciliated a degree of substantial sympathy and vivid belief, not always accorded or sought in such performances.

In the fragments he now perused, the writer seemed to have exhausted every drop of the bitterest draught ever held to the pale lip of human affliction—disappointed passion. She seemed to delight herself with imagining the last distress that could be now inflicted or withheld—that of separation from the object she had loved in vain. Whether this separation was voluntary or compulsive, imaginary or real, could not be discovered from the lines themselves; but, to Ippolito, they seemed like the struggles of weak resolution (such as might be supposed to linger in the breast of a vestal crazed with love), torturing itself with more last looks at an object it could not accomplish, and could not renounce. The first of these fragments appeared an attempt to blend the warmth of passion with that of devotion. Yet the passion was neither sanctified, nor the devotion softened, by the union.

'Tis past! my anguish'd heart proclaims
This mortal conflict o'er;
This silence speaks what words can't tell;
We part to meet no more.

Do not, I pray thee, shed one tear,
Let no sigh reach my cheek,
Or my o'er-laboured sense will fail,
My o'er-fraught heart will break.

I've wound my fainting courage high,
And struggled hard for breath;
Oh, let me bear away this smile
To deck the face of death.

Is it not near, the blessed hour,
When, fleshly suffering o'er,
We'll glow with spirits' sinless loves,
We'll meet to part no more?

But who can tell the last farewell of passion? It appeared impossible to hear from this subject. Her mind seemed fixed on a point, from which the object never lessened to her view. The next denoted a state of mind strange and rare; it was that in which all the corporeal parts of love have evaporated, and only the spirit lingers behind to mourn over the remains in which the decay of passion is lamented, not as a cessation, but a source of woe, in which the total decline of feelings, which have already begun to wax cold and hopeless, is anticipated—in which the "loosing of the silver cord and the breaking of the golden bowl," is expected with an anguish, which the loss of acknowledged calamity can scarcely be believed to inspire, except in the visionary mind of love.

Good night, good night, my journey ends,
The night-shades are closing fast;
But one faint ray prolongs the light,
Nor long shall that faint ray last.

Still, still while it gleams, must my steps pursue,
Still rove by that witching ray;
But not long shall I follow the false path it points,
But not long shall the wanderer stray.

Light the landscape no more, thou fairy beam,
But fade in the face of the west;
And let all be cold as the bed of my home,
And dark as the night of my rest.

For when mine eye views thy meteor sheen,
The way's long toil seems won,
And hope's quick pulse wakes my withered heart,
And my failing steps urge on.

Thou unnamed one, on whom while I gaze,
Mine eyes swim in dews of delight;
'Tis thou art my lone way's setting star,
In solitude and night.

But thou whose eye lit my early hope,
Come, witness its last gleam o'er;
Come, catch the least, weak, struggling sigh
Of the heart that can love no more.

For I raise my eyes to that madding form,
That once made their senses fail;
And I twine my languid arm in thine,
And unchang'd is my cheek so pale.

And that softened tone, to which rapture danced,
Its nameless spell is o'er;
And that eye, to whose beam the day was pale,
Darts fire and madness no more.

It is not that thou art less lovely, love,
Or less bright thy noon-tide high;
The sense still might bask in thy sunny cheek,
The soul still be lit by thine eye.

But I am cold, and a deathly chill
O'er each frozen feeling creeps;
And cold, the flow of the fervid fails,
And hush'd the loudest sleeps.

The master-hand wakes their song no more,
And their sound of accord is low;
And my wearied pulse is dead to pain,
And my fevered heart beats slow.

Then wonder not that my sighs are still'd,
And the cold tear congeals in mine eye;
'Tis nature fails when passion fades;
And love only with life can die.

For I have lived till each last hour
Has floated down passion's stream,
And lov'd till Heaven's immortal light
Was quenched in thy brighter beam.

My time, my health, my mind, my peace,
Were tribute to its sway;
And when each humbler offering fail'd,
I pined my life away.

Then wonder not, my heart's lost hope,
  At its scanted homage weak;
But read the cause in my sunken eye,
  In my wan and woe-stained cheek.

But shouldst thou approach the solemn bed
  Where fluttering life is stayed,
To pour its last look on thy form,
  Or for thy peace to plead.

May I not at that hour, when anger is dumb,
  My heart's deep wound unfold;
Oh, may it not fall from my dying lip
  That tale of horror untold!

Oh no, for ere then will the fine nerve be broke
  That should raise my clogging eye;
And all that would prompt my trembling tongue
  Shall be hushed as its last low sigh.

But the tranquillity promised by the farewell to passion was mere temporizing She still lingered over the remembrance, and endeavoured to describe the desolation of life, after its spring and hope are extinguished for ever. Compared to her former feelings, those she was now possessed with appeared like those of a departed spirit hovering over the deserted abode and memory of its human agency. Her love darted a spent and feeble ray through mist and vapour. Its direction was unaltered, but its lustre gone.

There was a ray that lit my life,
  It has sunk in the west so pale;
And once ere mine eyes that sight might see;
  I hoped their sense might fail.

There was a path of pleasantness
  In which I was spelled to stray;
I would I had died ere I lost that path,
  Though wild and lorn my way.

There was a voice which did discourse
  Sweet music to mine ear;

And (oh that I live to hear mine own)
  That voice I no more must hear.

The ray that lit my life is sunk,
  The voice is stopped with sand;
And o'er that path forbid, high Heaven
  Doth wave a flaming brand.

And I must wend my way alone,
  Despair's last curse to prove;
To pine o'er passion's vanished dream,
  To live, yet not to love.

But these pursuits soon failed to diversify the monotony of confinement. The repose of solitude soon degenerated into apathy—listless, depressing apathy. He began to remit the habits of watching at the window for objects—of taking the exercise the limits of his apartment allowed—of making those petty provisions against utter vacancy, that every one makes on the first apprehensions of it, but which gradually decline as its influence increases.

Dreading the total enervation of mind and body, which the progress of this habit menaced, he almost welcomed his second summons to attend the inquisitor. There are few who could imagine such a message would communicate joy; but Ippolito longed for the sound of a human voice—for the excitement which human conference supplies. He longed to try the powers of his mind and the organs of speech, to the exercise of which confinement had made him almost a stranger. The shadows that silently presented him food and light at stated hours had nothing of human but the shape.

He was again conducted, in utter silence, to the same apartment, from which he again found the light of day excluded at noon, and supplied by torches, which shed their smouldering and funeral light on darker hangings and sterner visages than he had seen on the former examination.

The depositions which Angellini had collected had appeared to him so momentous and extraordinary, that he had applied for assistants from the holy office at Naples, which were granted, to enable him to make a more full and deliberate report of the charges against his prisoner, before he was referred to the supreme cognizance of the tribunal in that city. There was more of form on this occasion than the preceding; and more of that appalling preparation, that dark pomp of mystery and fear—quaint habits, mute assistants, silent signals, and whispered consultations, by which the office obtain an influence over the firmest minds, utterly distinct from the sense of the awe of their authority, or the uprightness and ability of their proceedings.

The examination, which lasted six hours, consisted entirely of questions drawn from the various depositions made before the inquisitors, relative to Ippolito's supposed character and movements, both before and after he quitted Naples. Ippolito, collecting the utmost energy of his mind, and inwardly not displeased at the trial of it to which he was summoned, at first objected, in a moderate, but earnest manner, to the process of the examination. He demanded the names of his accusers. He was informed it was totally contrary to the practices of the institution to declare them. He then demanded a copy of the accusations, and time to prepare a refutation of them. He was told with this also it was impossible to comply; that if the charges urged against him were groundless, no length of deliberation was requisite for

him to disclaim them; and if they were just, the less evasion and delay in admitting them the better; so that in either case a categorical affirmative or negative was all that was expected from him. This was the sentence of the Neapolitan assessors; but on the representation of Angellini, they consented to let the depositions relative to which he was examined be read to him before they proceeded.

Ippolito listened to them with a solicitude which even his dangerous and disastrous situation could not repress, to learn the various opinions and conjectures excited by conduct so extraordinary as his had been. Nor could he even resist the visionary vanity that inflated him, while he heard himself mentioned as a being whose character and purposes were only to be known by fearful conjecture—who moved before the eyes of men in a cloud of mystery, through which they only caught passing glimpses of a form and movements more than human. The information laid before the holy office of his conduct while in Naples appeared to be the testimony of men who had watched it with wonder and suspicion, but without sacrificing either their judgment or their senses. They stated generally that he had been observed to wander out at night unattended, frequently with gestures of gloomy distraction; to proceed to a certain spot where he was met by a person of extraordinary appearance; that almost immediately on each meeting they both disappeared, nor could the minutest search discover a trace of their persons, or their direction, from that moment. To this extraordinary circumstance they added no fantastic comment nor wild exaggeration, but they strongly noticed the obvious and consequential alteration in the count's temper, habits, and pursuits, which, from being gay and open, had become severe, unsocial, and gloomy. In addition to these, were the informations communicated by the servant who had accompanied him from Naples, and the peasant he had seen at Bellano. These were as monstrous as fear, falsehood, and superstitious malevolence could make them.

The wretch whose folly had betrayed him at Celano, and whom he had afterwards forgiven, and condescended to vindicate himself to when they met in the deserted inn at Bellano, stated to the Inquisition—"That his master was a sorcerer; that he had endeavoured to seduce him to his iniquitous art; that he had fled from him to avoid his persecutions; that they had afterwards met in that untenanted house whither the count had resorted to confer with the spirits that were known to possess it; that supernatural voices had called him from room to room, and shapes of unimaginable horror had crossed and overshadowed him; that terrified at a situation which no human courage could sustain, he had swooned; and just before his senses forsook him, had seen Montorio sinking in a fiery cloud through a chasm in the floor, from which a host of huge black hands, armed with claws of griffins, were extended to receive him." The peasant whom he had met when wandering round the building, deposed that "he had seen him assume different forms while he spoke with him; that at the end of their conference he suddenly sprung upon the highest turret of the building, where he appeared mounted on a black horse, who breathed fire, whose feet were cleft into talons, and whose mane scattered lightnings; that goading this terrific courser with a large serpent he held in his hand, both disappeared, leaving a train of bluish light behind them." If this information proved anything, it proved that he had not entered the building at all. The inquisitors crossed themselves with devout horror as they listened to it, and Angellini hardly suppressed a smile that struggled with indignation and pity.

Ippolito observed, with astonishment, that not an article of this information had been supplied by the stranger; nor was there any mention of the terrible transactions of the vault at Naples, which he believed had been divulged by him to the Inquisition, and would have constituted the subject of his examination. As it appeared, however, it must be partially known to them by the process of the first examination, of which the subject had been the recognition of the inscription, he concluded that its present suppression was only a device of inquisitorial subtlety, which concealed the extent of information, in order either to lead to it by a chain of evidence it would afterwards be impossible to retrace or disentangle, or to anticipate it by confessions drawn from the prisoner in the course of examination. He resolved therefore to admit nothing but what they already possessed, of which its absurdity was the easiest refutation.

At the conclusion of the depositions he was solemnly exhorted to confess by the principal inquisitor. "What have I to confess?" said Ippolito; "what mockery of equitable investiga-

tion is this? You urge accusations too monstrous for the credulity of an idiot; and you hope, by affecting to believe them, to impose their belief on one whose conscience and memory disavow them, to make him doubt the testimony of his senses and the events of his own existence, or to lead him in the fictitious heat of vindication from imaginary charges to the mention of real ones." (At this ill-timed observation he saw the inquisitors exchange looks of grim intelligence: but he was exasperated, not checked by it, and hurried on.)—"Confession! of what use were confession to me now? If I should even convince you of my innocence, can you restore to me its purity and its praise? Can you restore it to me without suspicion, and without reproach? Impossible! He who has once entered your walls never can regain the estimation of society—never can regain his own confidence and honest pride. Whether acquitted or convicted, it matters not; he is held in the invisible chains of suspicion for life; the damps and dews of his dungeon form an atmosphere of repulsion around him for ever; the shadow of your walls darkens over him like a curse. Of what avail would confession be to me? It cannot recall the past—it cannot unmake me a prisoner of the Inquisition. Your dreadful policy can neither reverse its proceedings nor remedy its evils; it rushes through society, confounding, subverting, and trampling; but it cannot pause to raise or repair; and if it could it were in vain. The wounds it inflicts are mental, and therefore cannot be healed; the brand impressed by irons red from the furnace of superstition, can never be effaced, and ache at every breath of heaven. No reputation of habitual innocence, no actual evidence of universal integrity, can protect your victims. A single suspicion, a whisper, a look, can dash them from the height of human excellence into the dungeons of the Inquisition; the most abject villain may blast and destroy the most exalted of mankind. Though unassailable everywhere to the view, the most trivial of his motions, the very heel of his moral frame, may be reached by the shaft of clandestine malignity, and the wound is mortal. Of what service is acquittal to such a man?—is the world into which he returns the same as that he quitted? No; while he slept in the lethargy of confinement, the vestal fire of his honour, which it was the business of his life to guard, has gone out, and he sees its ashes scattered and trampled on. How are these evils to be anticipated by confession? Confession itself is an engine of mental torture, which none but an inquisitor would use; it is possessing yourselves, under the name of religious authority, of the means of gratifying carnal and selfish curiosity. It is where your natural forces have failed to lurk in the house of superstition, and enter in dishonourable triumph. The thoughts and actions of the purest lives cannot bear this universal scrutiny. There is no human being fully known to another; it is only by partial ignorance that mutual esteem is preserved. To the wife of his bosom, to the friend of his soul, to his own consciousness and recollection, a man will not dare to reveal every thought that visits his mind, there are some which he almost hopes are concealed from the Deity. When a man exhibits his mind, he shows you a city, whose public walks and palaces are ostentatiously displayed, while its prisons, its cages of unclean birds, its hold of foul and hidden evil, are concealed; or he exhibits it as he would the sovereign of that city, when he stands on the pinnacle of his pride, and looks round on the ample prospect of his own magnificence, not as when he flies from the resort of men, and herds with the beasts; when his power is lost in degradation, and his form buried in brutality.

"And why confess to you? What claim have you from nature or from confidence for the demand—or do you ground it upon the absence of all? Are we to repose in you a trust withheld from all mankind besides, because you have less motive of solicitude, less claim on confidence, less power or wish of sympathy than all mankind? Are you like the ocean, to ingulf in silence and darkness the treasures intended to be shared with affection and sympathy? Is confidence like the ebony, the growth of subterrene darkness, the nursling of a dungeon? No; it is your greedy, furtive, serpent curiosity, that longs to wind itself about the tree of knowledge; 'tis the ambition of a fiend, counterfeiting the aspirations of an angel; like the impure priests of a pagan idol, ye love to prey on violated purity, that as yet has never sacrificed to nature or to passion, and to call it a right of religion."

He would have proceeded, for the inquisitors listened with the most unrelaxed composure; but Angellini, shocked at his impetuosity, that offended without advantage, interrupted him by observing with severity, "That a vague and rhapsodical declamation was no defence; that a definite charge had been read in his ears, and that they were prepared to listen to his vin-

direction; that on the wild expressions he had used, no construction could be put that could tend either to the information of his examiners, or his own exculpation." This was said with the benevolent intention of dissipating the injurious inferences that might be drawn from the careless vehemence with which he poured out his thoughts.

"Vindication," repeated Montorio, "from what? From charges you do not, you cannot believe—from charges of which my present situation is the fullest refutation. Who can believe such powers as they ascribe to me to belong to a being whom they themselves hold in durance and dungeons? If I possess these powers, why do I not exercise them for my own preservation? If I can remove the barriers of nature, and sport with the opposition of the elements, why am I here? Have I more pleasure in terrifying a solitary peasant than in extricating myself from persecution and danger? Why do I not mount in flames? Why do I not cleave your walls at this moment? Do these powers desert their possessor at his hour of need alone? No; it is impossible you can be thus deceived; no habits of suspicion and bigotry could reduce minds to such a level in judgment; it is impossible such weak instruments could impel you to distrust the experience of your senses, the course of nature, and what should be more unquestioned than either—the honour of a noble house! No; your informers and your information are of a higher class; 'tis no dream of a lying menial that has brought me here."—"You are conscious, then, of some more important causes which the holy office have had for their proceedings relative to you," said one of the inquisitors. "I did not say so," said the prisoner. "You implied it," said the inquisitor.

At this observation a new object rushed on Montorio's mind, that of turning his defence into an accusation. He found that it was impossible to contend against the evidence of his dark pursuits they were possessed of; all that could be done was to make their confession fatal, if possible, to the minister of evil who had betrayed and destroyed him. The terrors and dangers of the fate that probably awaited his confession disappeared when he thought of his enemy trembling before the same tribunal with himself; his visionary person and claims either reduced to a definite and vulnerable substance, or analyzed and dispersed to their original element. His natural vehemence, his curiosity, his despair of exclusive vindication, urged him together to this bold movement. The toils that invested him he could neither rend nor unravel, but, with a lion-bound, he broke away and bore them with him.—"I am conscious," said he, in a firm tone, "that other and more momentous information has thrown me into the prisons of the Inquisition; but I am also conscious that he who supplied that information is dyed a thousandfold more black and deep in its implications than I am. If there be guilt, he has been the framer, the prompter, the minister of it. Summon him here, if you can. Confront me with him. Let his business be unfolded with a solemn and deliberate hand. When we stand as criminals together, then will I speak, and tell a tale that shall amaze your souls. Till then I shall only speak to arraign the justice of the procedure that treats a supposed offender as a criminal, and an actual one as innocent. He could not accuse me without condemning himself. Why is he not then here along with me? Can he alone, like the Messinean assassin, stab invisible and unpunished? Can he only shake off the viper of sorcery from his hand, and feel no hurt? Can he, like the fabulous ferryman, convey souls to the infernal regions, yet never enter them himself?"

Angellini again interrupted him, to assure him the conceptions he had formed of this character were totally erroneous; that he was an innocent individual, who had not even a personal knowledge of Montorio, and whose only motive in giving information to the holy office was a disinterested zeal for the catholic faith. Montorio persisted, on the other hand, in the most emphatic assertions of his positive guilt.—"He is a sorcerer," said he.—"He is an ecclesiastic," replied Angellini.—"He is a murderer," pursued Montorio—"He escaped with difficulty from the fangs of murder," said Angellini.—"He is a fiend," repeated Montorio, gnashing his teeth, "and his office is to betray the souls of men."—"His office," said Angellini, seriously incensed, "has been to rescue a human soul from its betrayers."—"Prove your charges," said the inquisitors; "prove that the person who informed against you is obnoxious to the power of the holy office, and here we pledge our faith that he shall be cited to our tribunal."—"Reverend fathers, he knows not what he says," said Angellini.—"I know what I say, signor," said Montorio; "and I also remember what I have said; I remember that I pledged myself to prove the guilt of your informer in the event of your summoning him to your tribunal, and

confronting him with me."—"And on what information shall we cite him?" said the inquisitor.

Again Montorio was silent, from confusion and fear. He found it necessary to criminate himself, in order to the bare citation of the stranger. In the moment of his hesitation, Angellini again interposed. "Reverend fathers," said he, "here is some profound mistake. The prisoner is evidently ignorant of his real accuser. Permit me to relate the circumstances under which I received the information on which he was confined; they will perhaps remove his errors with regard to the person of the informer, and assist us to examine this intricate and mysterious affair."—The inquisitors hesitated, till one of them reminded the rest that by doing so they might discover the person against whom Montorio's invectives had been directed, and that the discovery might furnish further matter of cognizance to the holy office. They therefore permitted Angellini to proceed in his narrative, to which Montorio listened with the breathless, fixed attention of one whose existence and vital determinations were suspended on the words of the speaker.

"It is now near a month," said Angellini, "since I was informed, one evening, that a stranger desired to speak with me on affairs relative to the holy office. I desired him to be admitted. He was in the habit of an ecclesiastic. His figure and face were remarkable; but of his voice I never shall lose the memory of the sound as long as I retain my senses. The singular degree of awe, almost amounting to repugnance, which his appearance inspired, was removed by his entering on the subject of his business with unusual promptness and intelligence.

"His narrative was extraordinary, but perfectly probable. He mentioned that he had been travelling from Padua to Naples; that his direction was to a convent in the western suburbs of that city, where he had not arrived till the approach of night. That his ignorance of the avenues of the deserted part of the city, combined with the lateness of the hour, at length suggested some apprehensions of his personal danger, which were confirmed when he saw, from the projections of a ruinous building which he was to pass, two figures occasionally leaning and retreating when they perceived themselves observed. He could distinguish, indeed, that their habit and appearance were utterly unlike that of assassins, or indeed any class of men he had before seen in any part of Italy; but he knew not what disguises assassins might assume in Naples, and he felt it was probable there could be no common motive for their partial and hurried concealments. In the first impulse of his fear, he dismounted from his mule, and ran to shelter himself under a dismantled arch, which he did not conceive to be connected with the building from whence they had appeared to start. He had hardly done so, when he heard their steps approaching his retreat, and saw their tall shadows projecting from the entrance of the arch. He rushed desperately forward. In the tumult of fear and flight, little accuracy was to be expected from him with regard to the passages he traversed or the objects he witnessed, otherwise perhaps deserving the minutest attention.

"His perceptions, he confessed, were only exercised to discover whether the steps of his pursuers were advancing on him. He perceived they were, and sprung headlong forward, with the rapidity of one who fears no danger but the obstruction of his flight. The steps of his pursuers gained on him. He perceived he had reached a flight of steps, and he rushed down them, without any other object than of escape. Occupied only by his fears, he did not perceive the vast depth he had descended to, till he was in utter darkness. Terrors of equal magnitude now beset him, and he endeavoured to retrace his former steps, or discover some means of relief and assistance. While he was thus employed, he perceived a faint light in the vast distance of the darkness that surrounded him. He approached it through many obstructions he described with the strength of personal suffering, but which I need not repeat, and at length discovered that it twinkled through an iron grating in the wall of the passage he was traversing; he applied his eye to it, and beheld within figures employed in actions which suspended every faculty of mind and sense as he gazed on them. In the first impulse of horror he would have fled; but, after a moment's delay, found himself rivetted to the spot by the very feelings that at first would have hurried him away. He remained long enough to observe the agents and their strange deeds, with that tenacious and indelible feeling which the very reluctance of horror impresses on the mind. He reported them to me with strong but evidently real emotion, such as none but the recollection of actual objects could inspire.

In consequence of this information, I proceeded with regard to the holy office, and to its prisoner, as you have seen; I also communicated the mode of his escape from the vault, and his extraordinary reasons for laying his information before me, instead of the tribunal at Naples."—"They were extraordinary," said the inquisitor, "but fully justified by the event."

Montorio had listened with the profoundest attention, but remained unconvinced. A secret mistrust of the stranger's agency bound up his mind as if by a spell of incredulity. He addressed himself to Angellini. "I have little," said he, with solemnity, "to offer in support of what I say but my own convictions. I cannot be supposed armed with a regular refutation of positions I now hear for the first time; yet there are no words of sufficient power to express the firmness of my belief that the circumstances you have just now mentioned are only a new device of subtlety and malevolence, which I have found exhaustless; they are incongruous, fictitious, impossible." He paused to search his memory for some circumstance to substantiate his assertions. After a long silence, he said, with a severe smile, "You will form a judgment of the strength of my convictions, and my earnestness to impress them on you, from my being led to confess circumstances no other power could have extorted from me. The vault of which your informer pretended he commanded a view, had neither grating nor aperture; it was on every side inaccessible but to those who visibly entered it. In this point I feel I cannot be mistaken. No lapse of time, no intervention of other circumstances, however numerous or important, can efface from my memory the few and minute notices it retains of that place. I have counted every stone in its walls—the curve of the arches, the depth of the shadow, the peculiar hue of its blackness, are written on my soul for ever. You see I do not deceive you when I venture on defences so distinct. Reverend fathers, it is impossible that any being could have approached from without the place your informer specified. He must have been the instrument of another's ministry—the channel of higher intelligence. I again repeat my adjuration that you will compel him, from whom you recived your information, to attend the tribunal of the holy office, and confront him with me personally."

"This incredulity is affected," said an inquisitor; "we have more than the bare assertion of the witness for his extraordinary information; we have proof such as none but the most intimate knowledge could supply, and such as artificial obduracy will resist in vain. Must we remind you of the mysterious inscription over the portals of the vault? Could that have been recognised and reported to the Inquisition by one who had never read it?" Montorio trembled; he thought he felt the toils of evidence tightening around him. "Must we remind you," said the inquisitor, in a thrilling voice, "of the bloody dagger that is for ever shaken before your eyes, and of the deed its sight recalls and punishes—that deed unseen, unspeakable, wrought in central darkness, lapped in the very skirts of the nether world? I see you tremble—I tremble myself." He sunk back in the seat from which he had risen in the force of speaking; the attendants hid their faces with visible shudderings of fear. Montorio, in broken and inaudible tones, said, with frequent intervals, "I cease to feel for myself—to speak for myself; I have no longer any power of defence or of resistance. I speak without hope of belief or conviction; but I speak it with the solemn firmness of despair. I am a prisoner without a crime; I am a visionary without intercourse with forbidden things; I am a murderer without the stain of human blood."

He stopped suddenly. A hollow, broken sound succeeded. The inquisitor motioned to the attendants to lower the lamp that was suspended from the ceiling, that they might observe the changes in his countenance. It was then perceived that he had fainted. He was conveyed to his apartment; but the inquisitors entered into a consultation that continued till midnight. When Montorio recovered, the operations of his mind were decisive and rapid. Danger was no longer indefinite or avoidable; but in proportion as it became certain, his terrors were diminished or exchanged for other feelings; the temper of his soul became at once rigid and vindictive; his sensibility of suffering was appeased by the hope of teaching another to suffer, and the horrors of the Inquisition only served to exalt his prospect of revenge.

On the next appearance of his guard, he signified his wish to be supplied with pen and ink, and to be undisturbed or some time, in order to prepare some documents for the inspection of the holy office. His request was complied with, and he devoted himself for some days to writing; but as he proceeded in his task, he was often checked by suggestions of repentance.

The goaded and unnatural vehemence of mind that prompts to extraordinary movements soon fails us, if their execution be not instant. This occupied some time, and during that time he often debated the possibility of some intermediate measure—often lamented the necessary violence of motion the emergency compelled him to and was only urged to the completion of his task by the recollection that he was pledged to its performance, and that the danger of confession in his case admitted neither degree nor diminution.

On the third day it was completed; and he then put it into the hands of Angellini, who received it with a look of mournful solicitude, which his judicial gravity vainly resisted. Montorio gave it to him in silence—a silence which the other's deep feeling did not permit him to break. He was quitting the room, when Montorio waved his hand. Angellini heard the sound this slight motion occasioned; and turning eagerly round, said—"You wish then to speak with me?"—"No, signor," said his prisoner, "no; I have now neither wishes nor fears. Let the holy office be acquainted as soon as possible with the contents of these manuscripts."—"And for me," said Angellini, with emotion, "you have no charge for me?"—"Yes," said Montorio, after a pause, "to reflect on the horrors of that fate, to fly from which I have plunged into the dungeons of the Inquisition."

Angellini quitted the room. For an hour after he left it the prisoner remained fixed in his seat, his clasped hands resting on his knees, his head declined, his eyes fixed on the ground, which he did not see. The sun set, and it grew dark; but he perceived no change of light or object.

At length he felt a step in the room, and dimly descried a figure which stood opposite him. He saw not whether it was human or not; nor did he raise his eyes till he heard, addressing him, the voice of the stranger. "You now," said he, repeating the words he had uttered at Bellano, "behold me in another form, not as a foreteller, but as a witness of your fate." Montorio beheld him steadfastly. He was now in the dress of a monk, which he wore with the ease and freedom of an habitual dress. "It is he," said the unhappy young man, speaking to himself; "it is he; but I will not see him."—"You can no longer avoid it," said the stranger; "here are no resources to palliate the deceptions of sense; we are alone; nor is there any human cause or object to hide from either of us the real character and purposes of the other."—"I will not look up till he is past," said Montorio, still speaking inwardly; "this terrible shadow will soon disperse, and I shall be a whole man again."—"Look up, look up," said the stranger; "it is no shadow that stands before you; it is the form of him who has followed you so long, who must follow you for a term still; of him from whom it is folly to fly; for your flight has only been into the clutches of the Inquisition."—"Better, a thousand-fold, than into yours; better into the hands of man than of you, whom I will not call a demon, lest I should wrong superior depravity. Yes, I have fled hither; and therefore it is that I can bear to behold and confer with you. Look round, and tell me what has an inmate of this mansion further to fear. I stand upon the utmost verge of nature. I shall see or hear my own species no more. I am a prisoner of the Inquisition for life. I have reached the bare and desolate crag, and the wave of vengeance bursts at my feet. Here I am safe in despair. You did not calculate this last giant-spring. You did not know that life is easily thrown away by him to whom it has lost its worth. You did not know that a soul can wrestle with its chains of darkness; ay, and do deeds with them beyond the pitch of mortal implements. Fool! how I have mocked and baffled you! how I triumph over you this moment! How did you enter this prison? By all that is good, I am rejoiced to see you! Hark! I have intelligence for you. I have told everything to the Inquisition—everything, by my immortal soul! I am a prisoner for life; I know it; I triumph in it. Better their chains for ever than yours, in thought, for a moment!"—"What do you call my chains? I never forged or bound them on you. I unfolded their connexion as far as was visible to humanity. Mine is a hopeless task—to reconcile nature to suffering, and pride to shame. But weariness will not excuse it. I, whom you think the sole and voluntary mover in this business, I am myself impelled by a hand whose urgings never remit or rest. The central seat of our mysteries at Naples—the solitary heights of the mountain—the vault at Bellano—this chamber in the prison of the Inquisition, are all but parts of a progress that is incessant and interminable, though it mostly holds a direction invisible to the human eye. I know your folly in disclosing your secret to the Inquisition; I knew it before I entered these walls. What have you gained by it? The pub-

lication of your guilt—the certainty of your condemnation. Were all the armies of the earth summoned together to hold you from the commission of that deed, it were in vain. They would only witness what they could not prevent. To resist the agency of the invisible world, you might as well employ a broken reed, a gossamer, a mote, as the whole pith and puissance of the earth. To conduct your steps in silence, and without interruption, I threw over them a veil of mystery. You have rent it open; and what have you gained by it?—Exposure without commiseration, and confidence without assistance."

"I will not," said Montorio, "be pushed from the proof by words. The trial-hour is arrived; the power with which we are to contend is extrinsic and impartial. I have strove darkling with you, but the light approaches at last. These walls are indeed the last retreat man would fly to; but they will protect me. I feel here a gloomy strength, a defiance of those devices by which you have deluded my senses. You cannot crumble these towers into dust; you cannot fight with an institution whose source is in the power and vitals of the church."—"It were better for you that I should; but your ingratitude and obduracy deserve that I should resign you to your fate."—"What is it you mean?" said Montorio. "Do you then know so little of the Inquisition? Do you imagine that they can believe the tale you have told—that they will not consider it an attempt to delude and mock them, and you as an audacious and obdurate enemy of the faith? No; should you disclose to them all you saw, and all you imagined, they would never believe your confession full or sincere; they will look on you as a hoard of dark secrets which can never be exhausted; and they will for ever continue urging you to confessions when you have no longer anything to disclose. Shelter in the Inquisition! Yes, they will give you shelter safe and deep; your bed will be burning coals, and you will be pillowed on pincers and searing irons. No declarations of ignorance will avail you, and no resources of fiction will shield you from their endless persecution."—"There is yet a resource," said Montorio, "I can die."—"Die! you know little of the Inquisition. Oh, they have horrid arts of protracting life—of quickening the pulse that vibrates with pain—of making life and sufferance flow on together like two artificial streams of which they hold the sources! They inquire to what precise limit nature can support their inflictions, and precisely to that limit they pursue them; and then remand their prisoner to his cell, to renew his strength for the next conflict. You will waste away in their dungeons, like the lamp that glares on your agonies. You will never—never escape their hands till you are unconsciously enlarged to do the deed you fled into them to avoid in vain."—"This is impossible," said Montorio; "the grave will sooner yield up its dead than the Inquisition her victims. Here I am safe. It is a dreadful immunity; but I welcome it. I will stretch myself on my burning bed; I will gripe the irons of torture, for they will protect me from you. To preserve my life and innocence is perhaps impossible; but it is at least possible to purchase innocence with loss of life."—"You are deceived. It is, indeed, in your power to aggravate your sufferings by fruitless resistance; but not to remove their cause. The deed you are fated to do you may delay, but cannot decline. Respiration is not more necessary to existence or consciousness to thought. You might as well contend to reverse the past as to resist the future. Your struggles may work the torrent into foam, but cannot repel its course. The dungeons of the Inquisition and the summit of a mountain afford you equal shelter. For proofs of the power with which I, the weakest minister of your fate, am armed, I can, at this moment, bid those bars of iron dissolve. I can lead you forth through every passage of your prison, under the eyes of your guard, in the very presence of the Inquisitors. Will you be wise? Is your arm strong? Is your heart set and bound up? Will you do the deed to-night? Within an hour you shall be on the spot; your path so secret, a leaf shall not rustle beneath your feet; your blow so certain, no groan shall follow it. Shall this be the hour—the hour of enlargement—ay, and the hour of fame? A pestilence, an earthquake, a volcano, live in the histories of men when sunny days and drowsy prosperity are forgotten."

His manner, as he spoke, changed beyond all power of description. It was bold, animating, daring; but mixed with a wildness that appalled, with a demon-greatness of wickedness and strength that exalted and terrified. He placed his hearer on the extreme point of a precipice—shook him over the abyss—and laughed at his shudderings. Montorio looked at him for a moment with a fixed but speechless eye, and then said, inwardly, "If my passage be only thither, there is a shorter way."

As he spoke, he sprung up with a violence neither to be foreseen nor resisted; and rushing past the stranger, dashed himself against the massive and studded barrings of his iron door. He fell to the ground. The stranger raised him, and perceived he breathed no longer. He bent over him. He received in his hands the blood that gushed from Montorio's forehead and mouth; and, holding it out, murmured, "Drink, drink, if thou hast any mouth; but do not haunt me with those famished eyes. Yes, yes, anon I shall sup with thee, and we will feast it well."

As he spoke his eye fixed on a remote spot in darkness; and he shrieked in agony, "Oh, hide, hide the scourge—thou seest I am about it!"

CHAPTER II.

The evening was dark and gloomy, Angellini and the principal inquisitor were seated over a dim fire of wood embers in a remote part of that vast structure; it was a lone detached turret, against which the dark waves of the autumnal sea were tossing. They talked of disastrous tales, of events known only to the agents of the Inquisition, such as made their prisons seem the abode of more crimes and miseries than the day ever looked on, when the inquisitor requested Angellini again to repeat to him the extraordinary circumstances of the confession of Montorio. "I have not," said Angellini, "all the papers in this closet, but one single perusal of them has made so deep an impression on me that I can easily continue the narrative where the manuscript is deficient." They examined and secured the doors, and Angellini, depressing his voice, proceeded thus:—

"It was about the middle of last summer that Count Ippolito was returning from an evening excursion on the shore of Naples. He arrived at his palace, and was about to enter the portico, when a stranger, whose figure and aspect were concealed by the swiftness of his motion, said to him, in a low voice, 'Signor, has your nativity ever been calculated?' Ippolito started—the inquisitor was out of sight. The servants declared they had seen no form, and heard no voice. Most would have regarded or remembered this circumstance as merely exciting temporary surprise or curiosity; but the words of the figure contained an appeal to Ippolito's favourite science, and that appeal was irresistible. That evening he was engaged to an assembly at the Alberotti palace; the images of expected gaiety had almost banished other musings, and he was ascending the steps of the palace, when he was entangled in a dispute between two cavaliers. In the crowd he observed a person who stood without any motion or share in the disturbance. Ippolito's eye was fixed on him by this circumstance, and a moment's glance of his quick eye discovered the person who had that night addressed him. He turned eagerly on him, but the stranger, anticipating the movement, turned on him, whispered, "Signor, remember my question," and was lost in the crowd. At the assembly, Montorio was absent and dejected—he quitted it early, and returned home. The door of the carriage, in which Montorio was leaning back musingly was thrown open by the servants, who were bowing with Italian obsequiousness as they waited for him to alight, when a face was suddenly thrust in at the opposite side, and that voice, of which the first sound could never be forgotten, repeated, "Signor, answer my question." Then Ippolito, alarmed and incensed, sprung from his carriage, and calling to his domestics, endeavoured to pursue his tormenter. Every direction was explored in vain. The unknown appeared to have communion with the powers of earth or air, and to be aided by them in his movements. Montorio, on his return to the palace, gave signs of that perturbation and alarm which had so terrified his page, who had not accompanied him. (Of this young person Montorio speaks with strong affection; what may be his endowments and virtues I know not, but their friendship is as tender as that of brothers; and, among his own calamities, Montorio enumerates the distress of his page for his disastrous fate.)

"His perturbation, however, proceeded not from fear, but from disappointment and curiosity—disappointment which had even mortified his pride, and curiosity whose pampered appetite had met its first repulse. That day was spent in vain search; at night he found the following billet on his table:—'Montorio, do you remember the person who questioned you last night?—are you interested in the inquiry he made?—would you venture to know and to explore it? Then meet him—but meet him without distrust or futile preparations—in the church of San

Piero, in the north aisle behind the fourth pillar from the confessional, when vespers are over, and the congregation dispersing. You may see him if you will; you may confer with him if you dare. The letter was anonymous, and the hand unknown. Whether Montorio would have neglected the appeal it contained to his curiosity, that in the last line, to his courage, was peremptory; and he repaired to vespers with the mingled satisfaction of feeding his curiosity and exerting his fortitude. The church was lonely and remote; he dismissed his attendants, and paced the aisle almost in solitude: the service was nearly over; through a narrow door he caught a view of the service, and of the priests as they bowed round the high altar with the imposing solemnity of public worship. A pause followed, and the organ burst forth, accompanied with the loud and deep chantings of the monks; and, mingled with them, came the toll of a bell that called them to service in another part of the convent. Ippolito listened, touched and subdued; but, endeavouring to shake off an impression which he felt to be merely local, he examined the congregation as they dispersed, and from time to time turned to the pillar, toward which he momently expected some one of them to glide. No one approached it—all had departed—and to the noise and stir of their departure had succeeded the solitary passing steps of the monks and attendants of the church. Vexed and impatient, Ippolito again turned to the pillar, and thought he could observe a deeper shade than it had before projected round its base. He advanced; a figure stood in the shade erect, motionless, and almost appearing a part of the column. Amid the joy of this discovery Montorio could not avoid recollecting that no person since his entering the aisle had visibly approached that spot. He advanced, purposing to address the figure, but its unmoved and utter stillness repelled him. He passed close to it, and fixed his eyes intently on it; the habit was that of a man, but dark and confused; the stature tall, the face concealed. Montorio passed and repassed him, pausing each time, but without obtaining the smallest notice or indication that the figure he beheld had sense or life. Convinced at length that his silence was stubborn and affected, Montorio making a full stop, addressed him in a low but resolute tone. "You have summoned me here; what would you have with me?"—"Nothing," replied the figure, in those tones with which, though heard so lately, he was well acquainted. "Why, then, was I brought here? Do you know aught concerning me?"—"Everything," replied the stranger. "Speak then," said Montorio, "I am here;" and he rested on his sword. "I have not power; I am now as other men; I am weak as a broken wave; but the hour cometh that has in it the force of unutterable things, and I await it awed and still."—"Why was I then brought here?"—"Like me you must await that hour—like me you must be borne on by it in dreadful submission; when it arrives you shall hear from me."—"I will not leave this church unsatisfied," said Montorio, impetuously; "whatever you are, or wizard, or imposture, I will know before I quit you; remember the mockery of last night." The figure glided away. Ippolito eagerly followed. It entered the confessional where the prior sat engaged in the holy service of the place; and he determined to wait even its termination, in order to see the stranger again. This resolution his impatience rendered intolerably tedious; he remained in the aisle, counting the moments, and expecting at the lapse of each to see the unknown issue from the confessional, when, with astonishment, he beheld departing from it only the prior, who quitted it with the air of a man engaged in solitary prayer. Montorio, in astonishment, now addressed one of the monks who was passing:—"Is it usual," said he, "for penitents to remain in the confessional of San Piero after the confessor has quitted it?" The monk beheld him with surprise. "I have but now," he eagerly explained, "beheld a person enter the confessional; I waited the end of his confession, and now I see the prior quit his seat alone."—"You are deceived, cavalier," said the monk; "I myself saw the last penitent this evening quit the confessional, and afterwards the church: it is the devout custom of our superior to continue some time in solitary prayer after his penitents depart, and this necessarily implies he must have been alone." Montorio, hopeless of giving conviction to the mind of another while his own was oppressed with perplexity, yet endeavoured to explain what he was assured he had beheld; when the prior, whose attention, as he passed through the aisle, was arrested by his gestures and exclamations, paused and said, "There is no penitent in the confessional, cavalier, nor has been since the conclusion of mass."—"Reverend father, pardon my impatience," replied Montorio, "I have reasons for examining this affair—reasons peculiar and important. Immersed as you were in the consideration of divine things, you might not have heard the entrance of him who

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The stranger turned; and for the first time, partially uncovering his face, fixed on Montorio a look of melancholy conviction, of which, as of all his looks and movements, the effect was resistless; it seemed to convey a depth of knowledge and compassion for some foreseen and inevitable evil, such as could be attained or communicated by no creature of limited and earthly powers. Montorio, silently subdued by that look, followed him down the descent, with an obscure but intimate sense of influence that could not be repelled, and of evil that could not be averted. It led to the vaults of the convent. They wandered for some time among those dreary passages in silence, till they saw a stronger light in the vault than what issued from the damp and misty lamps which twinkled through shade and vapour; it proceeded from torches which burned in a new opened vault, opened for him whose funeral was celebrated that night; around it stood some assistants, who were waiting for the corpse, and on whose dark habits and rugged visages the torches threw a yellow and smoky glare that terrified imagination to find a resemblance for. The stranger started from their view, and lighting some concealed preparation at a lamp which hung from the low arch, entered another passage, which, but for that faint light, was utterly dark. Montorio, who had no longer the power of retreating, followed; the stranger turned; his aspect was melancholy, but not ghastly; his voice hollow, but not terrible; he paused; the echoes of a clock, that struck one, were heard distinctly from the cloisters above. "It is the hour," said the stranger, "and dost thou dread to meet it?" Montorio, whose courage was inflamed by impatience, motioned onward; they proceeded; the stranger turned again, and something like human feeling was in his melancholy eye. "Yonder is thy fate, and dost thou shrink to behold it?" The noble disdain that flushed from Ippolito's eyes was his only answer. They turned a dark angle in the vault, and his conductor, in muffling the lamp he carried, let its light fall on a bier, where lay the body of a man suspected of murder, but who had died in prison under the terrors of his expected fate. Montorio approached; the event and the person had been known to him; he looked up—he read a dreadful interpretation in the gesture and expression of his companion, who stood over the bier embodying in his look all we conceive of those instruments who are said to prompt the crimes they predict; to realise uncertain evil by the suggestions of supposed necessity; to breathe the first thought of blood into the predestined murderer, and lead the devoted mind, through the horrors of anticipated guilt, to the daring abandonment, the convulsive energy, the high wound and horrid pitch of determined distraction. Montorio shivered; the influence of his habitual pursuit became in one moment serious and painful; he endeavoured to wrest his mind from its hold; he could not; and while he yet struggled to reason himself out of involuntary oppression, the light disappeared, and its mysterious bearer was seen no more. Left in darkness, and among the dead, a new object of fear succeeded; he called to his companion—he stretched out his arms in the direction where he had stood; and recollecting the dimensions of that part of the vault, he felt with the most accurate search every quarter that his hands or his sword could reach in vain; he encountered no object, he heard no sound, and was only recalled from his dream of pursuit by the entrance of the attendants with the corpse into another part of the vault; the light directed him to them, and he eagerly inquired if his companion had been seen by any of them, adding the closest description that fear and haste permitted him to give. The men stared with astonishment; and on his urging the inquiry, averred with one voice that no human being had that night visibly entered the vault but themselves. "Did he render me, as well as himself, invisible?" thought Montorio, as he returned, amazed and unsatisfied.

A letter, in the handwriting he now well knew, was again left in his apartment. "Your probation is over; you are without fear and without weakness; you may command my power and knowledge to their extent, beyond the reach of nature and thought, beyond the dream of enthusiasm—even in the wild and wishing hour you may command them. May, have I said? Alas! you must command them. Mine is no voluntary service. Oh, that worlds might purchase my exemption! But they cannot; and when worlds shall end my task will have but begun. As little voluntary is the spirit of inquiry that now impels you, and whose impulses you believe to be casual and free. Would you know more? I have no longer a right to conceal aught from you; then be in the west colonnnade of the church of San Piero, with no arms but fortitude, no companion but midnight; and when the bell shall toll I will stand beside thee." In intervals of these summonses Montorio had often inquired into the means by which they were

conveyed into his room; the domestics, on examining them, declared no such had been left at the palace, or given to them for their master; but when dismissed, after a fruitless inquiry, they talked much among themselves of a person that was frequently seen in their master's apartment, and who, it was said, disappeared when any one entered it. By this account, if he was more perplexed, he was yet more excited, and he awaited with impatience the appointed hour; it arrived—he hastened to the church of San Piero; it was a clear and lovely night; the moon flickered the columns with streaks of silver, and gave a more thin and pointed brightness to the wrought edges and tracery of the pediments and friezes. Montorio at every turn examined his watch, and with a beating heart and suppressed breath, perceived it wanted but a moment of twelve. Now it struck, and the stranger stood beside him. "Are you prepared?" said he, in a low, but firm tone. "It is Ippolito di Montorio to whom you speak—there needs no other answer," said Montorio, proudly. "Youth," said the stranger, "lay aside these weapons of fleshly warfare; where you are called to contend pride of soul and force of arm avail not; lay them aside, with the sword and the dagger, the strength of flesh, and the arms of mortality; take with you only fortitude, that will shut out light without a sigh, and firmness, that will bear to behold what it must bear to undergo." A voice issuing from the grave could not have delivered this monition in more chilling tones; Montorio felt their influence in every nerve, and followed his conductor with an awe which preserved his curiosity from levity, and divested his expectation of impatience.

They went on with silent speed; but the stranger sometimes paused, and looked upward; and Montorio once thought he beheld a tear in his eye as he raised it. They reached a remote and unfrequented part of the city; they stopped—the stranger seemed shaken with many emotions—there was no local cause for them; the quiet loneliness of the place; the moon, that seemed stationary for very brightness; the sea, whose chequered and sparkling waters just rose to the eye, and whose murmurs rose and fell with lulling measure—all seemed to speak peace to the spirit that had one peaceful element. "Oh, youth!" said the stranger, "the hour is come; thou, or I, may shun it no longer; and these struggles, these cold drops of inward agony, are for thee. The hour is come; and amidst a power that rules or reverses nature, I am as a worm of the dust, a thing of nought, confounded and dismayed. Oh, youth! it is for thee I have prayed that this task might not be mine; but he, whose hand hath made the thunder, will consign it to whom he will, and he must wield it, though its fires blast him."

—"By whatever power you act," said Ippolito, "you have excited in me wonder and amazement; hasten, therefore, that I may know whether I am not as often the dupe of a vicious sensibility of the marvellous, or whether these impressions are, indeed, the movements and intimations of my fate." The stranger produced a bandage. "With this," said he, "your eyes must be bound; and take with it a caution—whatever you may see or hear, be silent, be motionless, and be fearless." Montorio suffered him to fasten the bandage, and was then conducted by him through many ways, of which he in vain tasked himself to remember the direction. They now ceased to tread on the pavement, and Montorio felt, from the change of air, that they were in some building; in a short time they began to descend steps; as they descended the air changed again, but it was the chillness of subterranean damps; the echoes were dull and protracted, and no longer mixed with those sounds of life which they had heard in the open air. The descent seemed to be endless. Ippolito in vain tried to appease the irksomeness of involuntary blindness, and perhaps other unwelcome feelings, by reckoning the steps. The echoes became more hollow, the damps more dewy, and Montorio felt that even the misty and impalpable light that the bandage had not utterly denied him, was now obscured by intense darkness. He had often spoke, but received no answer, and now grew weary of the echoes of his own voice, unmixed as they were with any other sound, and giving an idea of utter solitude, which he was almost glad to recur to the pressure of his arm, and the sound of his conductor's steps, to repel. An hour had now elapsed since they left the haunts of men; and Montorio almost imagined this passage was intended to penetrate below the bottom of ocean, when he felt himself checked by the hand which led him. A sound then succeeded, which was so multiplied by the echoes of the place, that its distinctness was lost, and he found himself in a moment descending, with a swiftness so rapid, so breathless, so astounding, that he sickened with very giddiness, and gasped for the recovery of sense; the motion ceased—he knew not how he had descended—he was again led forward—many sounds met him in

his passage—some descended from above, and some brushed near him; blasts of different airs crossed him; some so hot, that they felt like floods of flame; some so cold, he shivered in their parching blight. A sound, as of the ocean in its strength, was then heard; it came nearer and louder, and Ippolito almost expected to feel its waters bearing up his feet. All sound and motion then ceased, and he felt himself slowly invested in a garb, of which the form seemed to be unlike any usually worn; his hands were unrestrained; he examined the garb with them—it was the garb of the dead. But this was no time for resistance, and he believed his only means of safety was the observance of the stranger's caution; prudence was for once combined with his courage, and he remained silent. A voice then, deep and distant, repeated the service of the dead; the responses were echoed by multiplied myriads of voices. Montorio heard the solemn words pronounced over him which no living man hears; he felt the shroud and the crucifix, he heard the bell and the requiem; he remembered his conductor's words, and expected to see the light no more, when his bandage was dissolved, and he was hurried forward.

What objects or circumstances he witnessed there he has not told; whatever intimations are given of them are casual and obscure, extorted by a sudden exclamation of pain, or involved in the train of other confessions; but from such intimations I believe them to be of a nature too horrible to be told; what I have learned has been principally collected from letters which passed between him and the stranger, and of which I have copies; at these meetings it should appear, no word was uttered, and whatever required explanation, or discussion, produced a letter, which was, as usual, left in his apartments, by means none could discover. Of the first of these the contents are as follows:—

LETTER FROM THE STRANGER.

"What can dispel your suspicions? What can obviate your doubts? You have already had every assurance I am no pretender, that I seek neither aggrandizement nor influence, that I am unanxious the impressions you receive should convey anything to you but a conviction of the genuineness of their cause and object; for myself, this is superfluous; I need neither consciousness nor proof of my commission. Ages have I strove in vain to lose the dreadful sense of it; it is on you I seek to make a single impression—that I am the certain and commissioned organ of your fate; that I bear a power and office which I must neither decline nor qualify, which you may neither resist nor change. Recollect how you have complained of the rapacity of former pretenders, wretches whose mercenary ignorance blasphemes the awful name and objects of the other world (whose visitation often and judicially punishes their presumption by the infliction of madness and idiotcy, the natural extremes of a brain overwrought with gloomy and cumbrous contemplations), and whose quaint fooleries are as easily detected as their needy avidity. What has been my pursuit of you? What have been my claims on you? The very dreadful instruments of our preparation, the form and circumstance of our meeting, are such as human hands could not collect without toil and pain, if you can, indeed, believe them to have been the collection of human hands; and what demands have been made but on your acquiescence and conviction? Here is a proof, a native and intrinsic proof, of the reality of my office and power, which no sober mind can well gainsay, that a number of beings should conspire to condemn themselves to toil, and pain, and horror, unexcited, unsolicited, unrewarded, merely to persecute and perplex another being, over whom they seek no other influence, and who can neither punish nor please them, is an outrage to the credulity of even a Montorio. Again, an impostor might perhaps stimulate your feelings by artificial and well-measured delay, but he would beware of protracting this beyond its due term of operation, of suffering solicitude to fret itself into impatience; but he whose power is beyond and unswayed by himself, must await its ebbs and its flows, the rush of its approach, and the lingerings of its suspension, in passive expectancy, hushed and still. Do you remember last night? Many times have you trodden that place which only your own human feet have ever entered; before you had been even summoned there, I told you I could foreshow every event of your life; yet—even yet—I have not the power to declare it. How many nights have now witnessed those unuttered and terrible things, which once obtained a knowledge and potency for me, now inscrutably withheld! Last night, moved by the danger to which your impetuosity opposed you from my ministers (whose services I command, though

I cannot repress their power or malignity), I had recourse to those deep and dreadful extremes which I once believed no human cause could demand the use of, or no mortal witness; but in vain, the master-agent of our movements would not be tasked; the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire were there, but he was not there. I wrestled with these terrible engines of his coming, I writhed in convulsed and fervent agony; and were mine the life of nature the struggles of last night had ended it. It was in vain that you departed with rage and imprecations that you would return no more. Was this, then, voluntary and artificial? An agent whose power and movements are his own, exerts them without producing any effect but fruitless toil and angry disappointment! Is this credible? I collect these circumstances, that they may certify to you what the levity of your mind and your experience of repeated imposition tend to conceal, or render indifferent to you; that my power and commission are extrinsic, are involuntary and are real."

To this, only part of Ippolito's answer appears:—"Whatever was the complexion of my mind when I formerly pursued similar objects, it is now totally changed though ever grasping at the secrets of another state, and pursuing their attainment under every form and colour of probability, I recollect rather feeling towards them expectation than belief—rather seeking to discover if they were really within mortal reach and capacity, than seeking them because they were.

"I think I recollect seeking to these professors, and awaiting their fantastic exhibitions in a mixed and not unpleasing state of suspension, where the awful solicitude from which no mortal is exempt, was tempered by the natural jealousy of deception, by the experience of disappointment and imposition, and, above all, by the native and inherent scepticism of negative experience, which is perhaps the only balance that renders the terrors of such expectation supportable, and even grateful. I was, therefore, unconsciously prepared for every event of such meetings, and I attended with a fortitude, in the cause of which many deceive themselves. I had curiosity to excite me in the pursuit, and possibly to support me had it been successful; I had vigilance, taught by experience to scrutinize into imposition, and I had a shade of levity over my mind, the offspring of natural and involuntary incredulity, which disposed me to laugh at detected folly and fraud, with the same facility with which I would have shuddered at the terrible discoveries the other event of the meeting would have prepared for me: above all, when I had received any impression from the strange objects which some of them were able to summon or to create, I examined and sifted it with a tenacity of which, probably, the motive was curiosity, but of which the end was uniformly the discovery of deception, of the force of local emotion, or of the assemblage of fearful or unwonted imagery. Thus, therefore, I continued to pursue it, hopeless of attaining success or certainty in the original object of my search, yet gratifying an appetite for the marvellous, which repeated indulgence had rendered restless, and fastidious, and insatiable, and of which the sensation resembled that which urges us to the theatre, where we gaze delighted by vision and sound, but not deceived into reality.

"From my first conference with you, the frame of my mind was totally altered; the severity, the simplicity, the high and remote modes of language and action I witnessed, struck me with a complicated feeling of fear and confidence, of wild joy and supernatural dread I cannot describe: all I saw was unlike all I had before seen. Instead of being mocked by fantastic jargon, I was restrained by solemn silence; instead of being plundered with vulgar rapacity, I was taught that all human influence, whether of force or of insinuation, was nugatory there; instead of commanding, I was commanded, and that by an influence viewless, and impassive, and unsearchable. Of all this, the effect has been the irritation of my feelings almost to madness; the inflammation of my curiosity to a pitch and point which I believe nothing but its very strength and vivid force enables me to endure. By all this terrible preparation a weak mind might have been depressed and subjected, and have relinquished its object rather than encounter the horrors that invested it; but mine is an elastic one, and it rises with a force and spring proportioned to the pressure it has been urged by. I feel all subordinate desires and objects absorbed by one—the desire to obtain that long-withheld and mysterious something which I seize with such a comprehensive grasp of expectancy, that it has no distinctness of form or name in my thoughts; the desire to know all you can disclose or cause me to know. It utterly absorbs me; I cease to inquire into the truth or evidences of your commission or

pretensions; you are anxious to press their examination on me—I am indifferent to them. Were it proved to me this moment that you were an impostor—that all I had witnessed was the very fooling of my fear, I would still pursue you with unabated anxiousness to supply my feelings with that food for which their appetence is famished and delirious. Talk no more of delays and proofs and the cold exercise of my faculties; I tell you I am mad—mad, till I am gratified! By what means you have attained this influence, I know not; perhaps it is a part of that strange power you say is forced on you; but exert it no longer to torture; I am miserable; my day and night are one delirious dream; my burning eyes have not tasted sleep for many days; the images of the night are ever around me; often I smite my arms and breast, and rend out handfuls of my hair to deaden or distract that pain, whose gnawing and fiery keenness seems to survive all change of time, and place, and motion, to sting me in my broken sleep, and live through every hour of life. Have mercy on me! If you can do anything, do it, and let me have ease. Montorio."

Many such letters appear to have passed between them, most of which contain repetitions of what I have now read: on the one side, claims to some undescribed and mysterious power, of which all direct proof was, however, withheld; and on the other, a continuance of complaint, and entreaty, and remonstrance. Whether relief was delayed because it was out of the power of the stranger to bestow it, or suspended, because he judged suspension would answer his purpose better, it is certain that purpose was fully attained. Montorio's mind was wrought to an intense and desperate state of feeling, all thoughts, and passions, and objects, were swallowed up by one; his whole day was passed in obscure expectation of the events of the night; the night in disappointment of that expectation; and the following day in the renewal of that dark and feverish hope, which, while it tormented his existence, seemed to constitute the very principle and spring of it. I have very imperfect documents of these melancholy times; but it should seem that one night Montorio contrived to signify to his conductor that his mind was burdened with many things, which haste and confusion would prevent him from committing to paper; that he was anxious to discuss them in a personal conference; and that, if the stranger owned the power he professed, he could indulge him with that conference, under hours and circumstances that would prevent the possibility of intrusion or discovery. "I will go," answered the stranger, "because your importunity proceeds from a suspicion that I cannot comply with it. I will go, therefore, to convince you that no time or place have a power in them to repel me." Ippolito wondered mentally, for he felt this had been the real motive of his request.

On the following night, Ippolito had been detained unusually late by an engagement; he returned with the childish joy of a truant; his valet lit him to his apartment; but both started back on observing a stranger in the room, in an uncommon garb, who sat with his back to the entrance, and who did not rise on their approach. Montorio, immediately discovering his visitor, dismissed the terrified servant, and advanced with some expressions, I suppose, of complacency which his surprise rendered incoherent—"You have forgotten your appointment, signor, but I have not neglected mine," said the stranger, with a smile somewhat grim.—"I am glad you have not," said Montorio; "I have long wished to see you here."—"I am," answered the stranger, "a constant though unobserved visitor; nor would you, perhaps, be pleased to know how often I have trod this room and drawn your curtains, and beheld you sleeping in that bed; nay, how often I have passed in the broad light of day, and almost touched you as I passed, and you beheld me not."—"Oh!" said Montorio, tossing with impatience, "is it ever to be thus? Am I to be ever abused and mocked, by a power that is extensive and resistless only to torment me? Can you thus control nature, and yet not give an individual that intelligence which the meanest pretenders to your art will endeavour to give at the first conference?"—"Because they are pretenders," said the stranger, sternly, "their very facility proves it; your mind, its habits and faculties, have been so vitiated by marvellous indulgence, so outraged by lying inconsistency, that you cannot easily admit the bare forms of reality—the cold solemnity of truth; you have been accustomed to the jargon of astrology—the fooleries of the wizard—the phosphoric blaze—and the spectre of gauze; you can digest the idea of beings who can mount in cloud and fire—who can yoke the spirits of the blast—who can be served by the forms of the elements, and discover treasures that nature never owned: that such should lurk in the hovel of indigence—should depend on plundered credulity for

their subsistence—should shrink from the cognizance of earthly power—and, when detected, want a single friendly familiar to save them from ignominy and punishment; you can digest this; and, therefore, to you, he that speaks with the simplicity of truth must appear as one that mocketh."—"I am indeed mocked," said Montorio, impetuously; "mocked by my own timidity—by my own folly; but, by the living God, I will be mocked no more!" He started up—he grasped the stranger wildly—"Either satisfy me this moment—tell me who and what you are—for what purpose you have fastened on me to haunt and to madden me, or you never shall quit this apartment. By that tremendous name I invoked, I will never relax my hold till you have told me whom it is I speak to."—"Who I am," said the stranger, rising to the question, "who knows, and who can tell? Sometimes I do not know myself; yet often I am as other men, and do with them the deeds of common life. But when that hour cometh—when the power is on me—then," said he (and his visage lightened, and his frame dilated), "the torrent and the tempest shrink from me—the ocean in his force, retires from me—the foundations fail from under me; then I ride on the horses of the night, I pass from region to region like the shadow, I tread the verge of being alone; that is my term of punishment, and its control is terrible; then am I left motionless—wasted—annihilated, on the mountain top, in the desert, on the ocean; I feel the earthly air breathe on me again; I feel the beams that give light to man falling soft on me; then I begin to live again. But I hear the feet of my taskers, and I spring onward before the moon has set."—"Unimaginable being," said Ippolito with strong emotion, "shall I worship thee as a deity, or shun thee as a fiend? What are those goblin shapes that are with you every night? and what is it ye do in the bowels of the earth?"—"Some of them are my agents, and some my punishers. We are a race of beings, of whose existence many have talked, many have read, and none believed; we can be only known by our properties, for our nature who shall tell? the meanest of us are employed in the mischiefs of creation—the meanest of us toil in the mountain and the mine, yell in the tempest, and lash and furrow the flood, edge the lightning points, and mix and watch the seeds of the pestilence; but we who are of a higher class, oh! who shall tell the height of our punishment? It is ours to watch over a frame a million times more corrupt and distempered —the heart of man, and his life, and his actions. There is not a deed of blood, there is not a deed of horror, there is not a murderer, there is not a being whose fate and circumstances make his species shudder to hear or read, but it is ours to lead and to prompt, to harden and to inflame, to sear the conscience and to steel the arm."—"And is it for such a purpose I am thus haunted?" interrupted Montorio, wildly; "and am I to be——what must I be? a murderer! a being whose fate shall make mankind shudder! Tell me," he exclaimed, seizing the stranger again, and almost shouting with vehemence, "only tell me and I forgive you."—"What your fate will be," said the stranger, "I can only intimate from the eagerness and tumult of the preparation that accompanied its disclosure to me. I was," said he, fixing his eyes and planting his feet, "in the very central core of the earth when I received it, and I stood beside you at night."—"And yet you cannot disclose it, even now?" He paused a moment. "Does this delay intimate anything beside your power of suspending your victims?"—"I dare not flatter you; I have ever found this supernatural delay precede the disclosure of something of uncommon horror, at least I recollect it to have been so in the case of your ancestor, Muzio di Montorio, who lived in the troubles of Massaniello?"—"In the troubles of Massaniello? why they were two hundred years ago!"—"They were."—"And you knew Muzio di Montorio, who lived at that time?"—"I did; my knowledge of circumstances, which could be known only to a contemporary, will prove it. He was a man proud and irritable. One of the Girola family had obstructed his success both in love and fortune; a deadly hate to this man fixed on Montorio's mind; from that moment it became my office to tend and observe him. I bore another form then; my prognostics of his fate, which were tempting and partial, roused his curiosity; I was with him day and night, as I am with you, but his fate was not permitted me to tell expressly. Weary at length of suspended expectation, and disgusted with Naples, where the constant presence of his enemy occurred, he prepared to fly from Italy; but he could not fly from me; he thought he had, however, and proceeded with satisfaction. On the dreary hills between Pisa and Lucca, he was benighted at a small inn on the borders of a forest; he inquired if he could pass the night there, and was told all the rooms were occupied by the Count Girola and his train. Muttering curses on the name, he was

preparing to pass the night in the forest, and brave the violence of an approaching storm sooner than enter the roof of his foe, when the host, recollecting himself, informed him he might have an apartment, for he had heard the count say he would pass the night at a kinsman's of his, whose castle was about a mile distant, and where his train, after passing the night at the inn, not to incommode his kinsman, might join him in the morning. The image of his enemy, in a lonely forest, unattended, unprepared, flashed like lightning on the mind of Montorio. I was beside him at that moment. He bid his attendants halt at the inn, and plunged into the forest with blind fury. The storm came on; he saw not who rode behind him in it; he saw not what shape was in the ghastly light that shone round his horse, as the heavy sulphur clouds rolled over the forest. But I and others were near him—near!—we were above, around, within him. He lurked in a thicket—a dark, matted, briery thicket—where, by the glancing of the lightning, he saw a cross erected, in memory of murder recently done there. As he beheld it, I heard him groan, and I believed my office was rendered void (for a moment); but, in the next, he heard a voice which made his teeth grind and his flesh quiver; it was the voice of Girola, desiring his page, who was on foot, and his only attendant, to hold his torch lower, as the forest track was dark and tangled. Montorio rushed forward; the page fled shrieking, and dropt the torch. Girola was afterwards found near the thicket, horribly butchered; his skull alone had seven deep wounds in it, as if the hand that struck him was resolved to hunt and extinguish life wherever it might linger. Muzio was also found by some messengers from the kinsman's castle, and by Girola's train, bareheaded, leaping and raving, for the rage of his revenge had deprived him of reason; he was brought back to Naples, tried for the murder, and condemned. In prison I was again with him, for human hindrances are nought to me; he knew me, for his reason returned, and acknowledged the truth of my intimations. I was with him in the last terrible hour, and wished my being frail and finite like his. But it must not be; with me time is ever beginning, suffering is ever to be. But I talk of myself, and no wonder, for every mode of human misery revives my own, which mixes with all, partakes of all, and yet is distinct from all, by a dreadful exemption from solace or mitigation, or end."—"This is passing all belief," said Ippolito, who was musing and speaking inwardly. "If we yield to these things, if we do not rouse up our minds and put them to the issue, we may at once resign all power and exercise of reason." He paused, and fixed his eyes earnestly on the stranger. "The circumstances you have related are such, indeed, as none but a contemporary (or one versed in secrets I thought hidden from all strangers) could know; yet still I listen to you, mazed and reluctant; but," rising and eagerly advancing, "if you can give me one proof, one solid, masculine proof that you witnessed the transactions of times so distant, I will yield, I will believe everything, I will submit to everything, I will crush everything in my mind that rises against or resists you."—"I can," said the stranger, rising also, "the portrait of Muzio is in the next room—take that taper and follow me; survey that picture, the left hand rests on a marble scroll. Do you see the ring on that thumb?"—"I do."—"Nay, but remark it, 'tis most remarkable, so much so that it was always worn by the owner, and faithfully copied in the portrait; it was an antique, found in a vault in the demesne of his friend Cardinal Lanucci, a man well known in the consistory in those days, and presented by him to Muzio; you have observed it, now look here." He showed the ring on the forefinger of his right hand. "You must often have heard of this ring; you must have heard it disappeared with Muzio, and that your family deplored the loss of it; he gave it to me almost in his last moments, for I was with him then; and now," said he, with an unutterable look, "now he is with me." Ippolito was so absorbed in wonder at the circumstance, of which it was not easy to dispute the evidence, that he even forgot the constant subject of his solicitude and inquiry, and suffered him to depart without question or delay. As he was quitting the apartment, which looked into the street, a number of monks passed along, who were going to visit a dying man, and who elevated the host for adoration as they went; Ippolito, scarcely waking from his trance, paid the short form of habitual worship, but the stranger turned away disconcerted and perturbed.

Ippolito felt delight at his departure; this last circumstance impressed him with the terror that attends the doubtful presence of something not good, and he leant from the window, half expecting to see him dissolve in air or flame as he quitted the palace. But it was now broad

day, and he saw his strange visitor pass with slow and visible motion down the Stradi di Toledo. But the impression which the conference was intended to convey soon revived, and Ippolito describes it as most strange and peculiar. He writes, that when he awoke from his noonday sleep (now the only one he took), the first sensation he experienced was a consciousness of new agency, a new view of existence, a clear and thorough perspective, in which the modes of life lay before him, not as they appear to the human mind, mixed, uncertain, and obscure, possessing an eternal power of exciting expectation by novelty, and tempting solicitude by doubt, but all equally near and familiar, and, as it were, in the same plane to his mental eye, as if by some optical deception all the distant objects of a long journey were at once rendered equally large, and striking, and palpable, to one who had but just set out on it.

But the effect of this extraordinary approximation was not to make him satiated by the nearness, or weary of the familiarity of these objects; no, he felt his mind as it were hedged up and pressed on by them with a force which no other could interpose between or remit; his powers seemed not to be occupied, but compressed—not ambitious of enlargement, but incapable of dilation; to him there was but one course to be followed, but one act to be done. He felt like one whose fate is already told, and to whom no future discovery can reveal any object of toil or of solicitude; there was, therefore, within him a strange passiveness that yet did not exclude the highest degree of busy excitement. He felt some great event was not to be wrought, but to be waited for; all the dulness of lingering expectation was superseded by this great event being as it were placed in contact with his mind, in place of tumultuous preparation; there was therefore an earnest awaitment, and amid the most vigorous mental emotions he possessed an entire animal calm. When he arose and went abroad, and looked around him, those whom he met, and their pursuits, appeared to him indescribably vague, and trivial, and hollow. He mentally wondered how men could be engaged in pursuits whose attainment was not certain, or in views whose objects were distant and indefinite. A million times in that day he said to himself, "How can these beings exercise such alacrity and zeal for they know not what? They cannot see the events of another hour, yet they push on with eagerness in their eye and activity in their motion. How dreadfully flat and vacant would such pursuit be to me; in me the clear and certain view of supernatural disclosure justifies the utmost energy of motion as well as the utmost patience of expectation." But when his mind had partly recovered from the glare which this new light had poured on it, and the artificial nearness in which it had placed the objects it disclosed, he began to inquire what new light had indeed been poured on his mind, or what new object had been discovered by its help? None! The intimation of his fate had been conveyed in the most general terms of doubtful prediction; something had been revealed, but without circumstance or connexion; all that can prompt inquiry or distinguish between our own conjecture and the information of others, was concealed. But enough had been told to fill the high-minded and romantic Ippolito with delight while he thought of it; his fate was to be no vulgar one (by the agent employed to announce it); he was not to fall with the unknown, nor lie with those that are not remembered; something great, terrible, or tragical was to mark the close of his course.

Before the day ended he had mentally rehearsed, and compared, and applied all the circumstances of high and distinguished endings of life he could remember; calculated what relation the most probable of them could bear to the period of his own; and, clothed in the array of visionary heroism, beheld life and death pass before him with indifference. Such was his propensity to the romantic and the marvellous, and such his thirst for distinction, that the gratification of these primitive feelings of his nature was not only a balance for the view of near and expected dissolution, but even for those more dark and disastrous intimations which the stranger suggested relative to the usual complexion of the fate of those to whom he was appointed to predict it. The triumph of these high-wrought and vivid feelings was short; he was about to exchange the pride of gratified solicitude, the stirrings of noble expectation, the dream of high-fated and heroic visionary, for doubt, which he believed to be gone, and for remorse, which he thought never would arrive.

I do not know whether for some days after this visit he saw the stranger; I rather imagine not, for he had again leisure and relaxation of mind sufficient to mingle in society. Such is the power of habit over minds even in the highest state of excitement. This I collect from his

next page, which, though sufficiently incoherent, informs me he was engaged to a *fête* at the villa of the Countess Verano, near the foot of the mountain. The villa was not sufficiently large to contain the numerous company, who intended to stay for some days, and most of the cavaliers passed the night in temporary buildings, which were scattered through the demesne, furnished with refreshments in the day, and illuminated in the evening. To one of these Ippolito retired; but the balmy moonlight and air that came mingled like one element through the bowery lattice of his hut, refreshed him more than sleep, and he arose and feasted silently. He had not been long at the window, when he thought he saw the figure of a man whose habit and gesture were strange, advancing from the trees, and moving with caution and fear. Whether his mind was fatigued by dissipation, or whether he saw no resemblance in this object to any that might excite an apprehension, he observed it, and saw it disappear without an inquiry. Soon after he retired to his rustic bed; the lamps had been long extinguished, but the moon shone full through the foliage of the casement, and once accidentally raising his eyes, on thinking that light obstructed, he fancied that he saw the face of a man at the casement, looking in earnestly. Even this made only a momentary impression on him, and he was soon asleep. We are utterly the creatures of time and place; had the day been passed in solitude, had his dormitory been at a distance from the habitations of others, had there been an impression on his mind, like the expectation of some fearful thing, much slighter appearances would have roused him. He slept not long, however; he was awakened by a glare of light, and a pressure on his breast; he attempted to rise, but could not; and when he was able to distinguish objects, he saw the stranger bending over him. There was a wild force in his expression and gestures, and a combination of the fantastic and horrible in his appearance that made Ippolito shrink as from a spectre. A long dark robe was his only covering, on which the characters and emblems were, some of them too obscure, and some too wild for examination. It was fastened by a cincture, on which the word—"Mystery" was inscribed; his long arms were bare, his long black hair streamed around him, but the temples were bound by a circle of fire, whose points blazed in the eyes of Ippolito as he looked upward. "Awake, arise, Ippolito di Montorio; arise, and come with me."—"Who are you? and wherefore are you come? and whither must I go?"—"The hour is come; stay not to question; the power, which nothing can resist, is come; stay not to question." As he spoke, he disappeared. On what a subtle hinge do our motions turn! Had the stranger but waited to repeat his injunction, or allow time for expostulation, Montorio would probably have been checked by the delay, and forborne to accompany him; but his departure had an air of independence in it, that impelled Montorio to follow him involuntarily. He had lain down in his vest, and now, wrapping his mantle round him, soon overtook his conductor; the latter proceeded with a speed that did not move, but glide; Ippolito, with all the vigour of youth and expectation, scarcely could keep pace with him; wherever they went all seemed buried in sleep, and without exchanging a word, or remitting their speed, they reached the suburbs of Naples. The bandage was again put on, and Ippolito conducted to the subterranean passage. What his feelings were at this moment he probably had not leisure to remember or describe. A man who, inflamed by dissipation, is roused from sleep, and plunged among objects of terror, can only tell of a mixed and tumultuous state, in which, though all was unpleasant, nothing was distinct. The first clear impression that such a person would experience would probably be from an object affecting not his mind, but his senses; and, consistently with this, he says, that when the bandage excluded from him the distraction of external things—when the echoes of that passage smote his ear, and his breath was driven back by the dark and heavy air, the mist that had obscured his mind and senses seemed to disperse, and he became suddenly and keenly capable of reflection. His first sensation was delight, a proud and eager delight, that welcomed an object so remote and long desired, not without an awe, such as his present circumstances suggested, and such as the romantic mind loves. But while he was yet in the confusion of sudden joy, a strange feeling came to his heart; a doubtful terror, such as he had never before known, was on him. To bodily fear he was a stranger. He spoke of this sensation as the inward and sensible motion of a power above him—a power that impressed the evidence of its own agency by a resistless consciousness, an intimate peculiarity which cannot be communicated, but cannot be mistaken. The stranger felt his steps falter—he paused—"I am out of breath," said he; "and this air suffocates and repels me."—"That is not your motive for pausing,"

said his conductor.—"I acknowledge it is not," said Ippolito; "there is a feeling within me such as no time or place, not even this, with all its circumstances, ever suggested to me before; it tells me to return, it tells me to visit these haunts, to proceed in this business, no further. I wonder at the sudden change of my mind and views—I wonder at the gulf that seems to have opened between me and my most vital pursuit—at this utter dampness and despondency that has struck to my heart's core; it makes me an astonishment to myself. But I believe it to be the intimation of a power either within me or above me; and this hesitation is, not to obey, but to ascertain it." The stranger paused for some time. "The sensation you describe you do not know the cause of; nor would any hour or place, but those in which we now are, justify me in its disclosure; it is part of the influence of this most signal night—part of the influence felt by all—by the traveller in his lonely journey, who hurries on at this moment, he knows not why—by the retired man, who trims his lamp to repel the solitary feeling that comes to his heart—nay, by the very child, who, waking, now shudders a prayer, and tries to hide itself under sleep. The influence of this hour is felt by all, and misunderstood by all; they judge of it by their various superstitions of time and place; it is the presence of our master that hangs in the elements, darkening the night, and sending fear into the souls of men. This influence is now felt by you; but mixing it up with your habitual feelings, you mistake it for a monition from a power that reaches not here."

This new appeal to his curiosity made Ippolito at once forget his doubt and hesitation. "Who is your master? let me look on him?"—"He has neither name nor form, nor symbol of existence."—"How then can you know that he is present with you?"—"By signs which cannot be told to man."—"And is it his presence you have required so long, and will it now enable you to reveal my fate to me clearly and faithfully? is this the great opportunity so long withheld? shall I know all to-night?"—"Whatever is to be known must be known to-night; though uninvoked and invisible, he is present with us, and all things are possible. I have neglected nothing to prepare me for the business; you saw me surrounded by fires, the relics of the grave, and the blood of dead men; but what hands arrayed me in them," said he, in a deeper tone, "you could not see."—"Proceed," said Ippolito, eagerly; "if, indeed, you have such power, and this be its hour of exercise; if I shall learn to-night what no mortal power can unfold, it is the very pitch of my enthusiasm, the very point and sum of my visionary ambition; and I will follow you, though my steps falter, and my mind sicken with some unutterable presage; but if this be a night of disappointment, by him whose name I dare not mention in this den of sorcery, I will enter it no more."

His conductor enjoined silence, and led him onward; they descended. Ippolito endeavoured to collect all the strength of his mind for what he believed to be a signal, even if a fictitious struggle; but such were the terrors of the place, and such the impression, utterly distinct from deception or professional imposture, that attended the words and movements of his companion, that he sought in vain for that relief which the belief of having only to do with beings like ourselves always affords to the terrors of such an encounter. He endeavoured intently to recall to his memory impressions of former awe, expunged by discoveries of former deception; but there was no resemblance either in the modes or agents, to qualify his present emotions with the suspicion that they were excited in vain; and he continued his silent progress in that unpleasant state of mind in which receding expectation is pursued by advancing fear, and the apprehension of having gone too far is aggravated by the doubt that it is possible to return. They went on, however, without interruption, until they arrived at that place of which I could get no description, except from sudden starts and exclamations of horror. The bandage was removed. Ippolito observed that every object bore a different aspect on this night from any he had seen on his preceding visits; whatever strange appearances used to meet or greet him on his entrance were now removed, or silent. As he passed through the vault the former ministers of fear were stretched around him in deep sleep; and as he walked among them (the blazing and up-pointed hairs of his conductor his only light), some of them shuddered, and some moaned; some of them laughed, and some gibbered inarticulately, and pointed towards him. "Of those forms," said the stranger, "the living spirits are now absent; for, ever before they meet their master, they have a short space of rest and remission; it would weary the imagination to follow their flight now, where they are contending with contending elements, or shooting on the track of the meteor, when he careers beyond this bourne of earth, and sus-

pends them over the unknown vast, 'without form, and void.' Of those that haunt the habitation of man, it is easier to guess the pastime; some are weaving the dim and ghastly visions of the sick, some are searing the sleep of the guilty with sounds of remembered voices, and forms that they thought sleep would shut out; some hide in ruins, from which they send wailing voices, that seem like bodings of fearful things to the belated passenger, or lights that lure him to the den of the robber, or the brow of the precipice; and some in the dwellings of the dead, where they do things such as crazy superstition, or the howling maniac, never dreamed of." On Ippolito's mind this assemblage of terrible imagery produced no additional effect; he had wound it to a fearful pitch—even to that, of all others, to our nature the most repugnant, which, laying aside all the softnesses and levities of life, prepares to look upon the unclothed and unqualified, and near-brought nakedness of death. He said he felt within him a dark strength, a stubborn and horrid force of mind, as if he were determined to be revenged on any terrors the discoveries of the night might prepare for him, by contemning and defying them; for so strong was the impression of the reality and certainty of what was about to be disclosed to him, that he had no more idea of resisting or evading it than if a voice from heaven had declared it to him. In this ferocious sullenness, therefore, his mind took shelter; and though he endeavoured to exchange it for that resignation of which he had heard moralists talk, and which he felt to be the more appropriate feeling of that crisis, yet still the natural resentment of an oppressing force, the native abhorrence of having our liberty abridged, and our path hedged up and carved out for us (even by a superior power, and of the knowledge of whose precise operations our pursuit has been eager and incessant), filled him with emotions gloomy, perturbed, and rebellious. What were the peculiar rites of this signal night I know not, nor whether the presence of the evil one superseded the attendance of his ministers, who were absent on their goblin devices; but after describing his feelings in lines of which the tremour is yet visible, Ippolito went on to tell me he was left alone, and in utter darkness, in some remote part of this immense space (which he described as a territory under ground), with injunctions neither to speak nor move, but to see, and to mark what he beheld. By what means he was to see in utter darkness he could not conjecture, till, at a distance, he beheld a small blue flame rise before him; it spread and enlarged gradually; and ascending to a vast height, stood, without any of the flickering or volatile appearance of fire, a fixed and voluminous curtain of vapour. Its light, though strong and distinct, but partially discovered the extent of the vault, its dusky and ill-defined roof, and those parts of it whose limits pressed on the edge of the flame, were faintly visible; into the recesses of deeper darkness that spread around him Ippolito felt not inclined to look. Meanwhile the body of the flame slowly diminishing and dividing, was suspended in a luminous arch, within which appeared a black reflecting surface, which filled the whole interval, and which Ippolito compared to a mirror of black marble. He gazed intently; several undefined forms chased each other over the surface, and were lost in the columns that formed its frame. At length a full distinct form appeared directly opposite to him; it was in a modern garb, the face was concealed, the gestures indicated distraction and dismay. Ippolito, as yet unconscious of the intelligence they were to convey, watched its motions fixedly. Had the figure availed itself of every mode of speech and expression, it could not have conveyed more powerfully the idea of a being impelled by a power resistless and invisible, to some deed or object, from which it shrunk, sometimes with humility of deprecation, sometimes with devices of evasion, and sometimes with convulsions of resistance; still the power that acted on it appeared to increase in strength and effect, and its progress towards this event appeared more rapid; its motions were now most strongly indicative of fear, irresolution, and reluctance; like the animals who are said to be within the sphere of fascination, it shivered, and parleyed, and retreated—every motion a start, and every limb in a struggle of aversion that protracted the misery it endeavoured to shun in vain. At length, with a vehement impulse, he snatched the dagger, to which his hand had been often involuntarily directed, and threw it from him, with the force of one who wishes to remove from him an object of temptation, and appeared to regard it for some time as a respite from internal persecution; but in a short time the influence appeared to operate again; again he appeared to make the faint yet desperate struggles of one who knows that all struggles are bootless. With a quivering, and yet a straining motion, he approached the place where the dagger lay; often receding, his feet bore him to the spot; often wincing at the touch, his hand at length grasped

it strenuously; but then all further power, or means of delay, seemed to cease. The figure rose severely erect, as if every nerve were forcibly dilated, and the whole man wretched and wound to a pitch of unnatural energy, and then moved away with a motion, which an effort at swiftness, struggling with the warped and contracted state of the muscles, rendered frightful. The figure and his motions conveyed one idea so powerfully to Ippolito, that, on his disappearing, he exclaimed aloud—"He is going to murder some one!" Almost as he spake, a cry came to his ear, not like the cry of individual agony, but as if all the terrors of a last dying groan were mixed with the shriek of those who look upon some direful thing. Ippolito's hair stood erect at that sound. The figure reappeared; his actions now were the ravings of despair; his garments were splashed with blood, and he held the dagger with the gesture of one whose horror has rendered him insensible that he holds the witness of his condemnation. A confused sound was then heard, and several dim figures appeared on the tablet; Ippolito heard the rattling of chains, mixed with the toll of a bell, and that hum of preparation which accompanies some event of moment; the agonies of the phantom seemed to redouble, and Ippolito instantly comprehended that the punishment of his crime was approaching. In a short time figures in the habits of executioners surrounded him; in the struggles of despair he broke from their gripe, and falling on his knees, and stretching out his arms, with the gesture of one who addresses heaven, not to appeal, but to accuse, the covering fell from his face, and Montorio, darting towards him, beheld his own. The figures disappeared, the sheet of blue fire closed over the tablet, and sinking into the floor with a faint hiss, expired. Ippolito was silent for some moments, from the struggle of feelings that almost suffocated him; at length rage, and amazement, and horror, found vent in a storm of execration and fury. It is impossible to conceive with what abhorrence his mind, so high-toned, so ambitious, even romantic in virtue, and impracticably rigid in its system of honour, with what abhorrence it must have struggled with the idea of undergoing the vilest of punishments for the vilest of crimes. There is a delicacy, too, taught by early luxury, and the indulgences and exemptions of rank, that shrinks from the debasing circumstances which attend the commission and the punishment of a crime with as much native antipathy as virtue feels at the crime itself, and which is often a security for the forbearance of evil, in minds where the purer principle is absent. Ippolito was all outraged, and inflamed, and revolted; and the appearance of the stranger, on whose entrance the vault was lit again, only gave his rage an object. "Monster!" he roared, "was it for this I was drawn hither?—to be abused by a wizard lie, a damned prediction, which no heavenly power could doom—nor you, nor all your hosts of fiends, nor Satan himself, could tempt me to realise? Was it for this I watched and waited? was it for this I resigned the peace of my existence, and the welfare of my soul, that I sought the haunts I believe of demons, and yielded myself up to you, their leader, thou Archimage, thou Beelzebub, prince of the devils, to be told that I am—that I must be—oh! it chokes my utterance, it blasts my lungs to speak it—what?—a murderer! a skulking murderer!—dragged from his hiding-hole by the hands of the common executioner, that does his vile office on the beasts of the people—monster!"

The burning tears of rage burst out in spite of him; the stranger stood unmoved.—"Whom do you accuse? You would behold your fate, and you have beheld it."—"Impossible! wretch! liar! impossible! Do I not know myself? Would I not search out, and stab with my sword, my very heart's core, if it could harbour a thought of depravity? Had I been represented struggling with an open, armed foe, had I been represented acting in the fever of passion (though even so I could not wound the unprepared), had it been aught but this, I would have borne it, though the perspective was filled with racks and fire. But this—what pretext—what device—what excuse? I have not an enemy on earth; no, by heaven! I am as void of hatred as I am of fear. But why do I linger? Let me from this cursed den; the very air breathes lies and witchery; I am infected while I stay here; the very consciousness of a crime is stealing on me; I am tempted to do something vile and guilty: and may all the horrors, the indignities, the low-sunk depravity I am menaced with, fall on me if I ever from this night enter your haunts, or have intercourse of any shape or circumstance, or any pretext or temptation with you or your associates, by they fiends, or impostors, or what they may; nay, if I do not from this night renounce all pursuit or search of this damned art, that curses alike with suspense or certainty!"—"Go," said the stranger, still sternly calm, "go; and the fulfilment of your curse go with you; for from henceforth it shall ever seem as if this

vault indeed engulphed you—as if your view was bounded by its darkness, and your thoughts filled with terrors; what you have seen or heard this night shall never leave your mind's eye; wherever you are, you shall remember me."—"I will lose my memory first in drunkenness or madness; I will drink mandragora and opium; I will have a drum beat on my head when the thought of you is there."—"That is but temporary; you will remember me in the hour of your guilt."—"Liar!"—"You will remember me in the dungeon." Ippolito stopped his ears. "You will remember me on the scaffold, and the image of him you have murdered will be scarce more terrible than the image of him you have belied and spurned."

"The image of him I am to murder!" said Ippolito, who had in vain endeavoured to shut out the deep voice of the stranger; "where is it? Is it near me?"—"It is," replied the unknown, "with myriads of other unclothed embryos of future horror; here the shapes of things untold are assembled; spirits that tempt, and spirits that punish, are here awaiting their task, and howling for their prey in these untravelled spaces. You cannot see their form, nor hear their sound, as they sweep past you; yet how many are gathered around you now! For, on this signal night, myriads are assembled to attend their master and mine." Ippolito, who was quitting the vault, though he knew neither passage nor direction, hesitated; his mind was in that state when the violence of its agitation is favourable to the most improbable and contradictory impressions, but in which it always seeks a relief to its distrained and overwrought frame in an extreme, and therefore, if it deviate from one, certainly declines to another. At such a moment, the temptation of his habitual curiosity, so critically suggested, and the near prospect of its gratification, combined with the impression of sincerity, which the stranger's unyielding calmness involuntarily conveyed to him, wrought a strange and sudden change in the whole frame of his feelings. He returned slowly, and faltered out, "Can you, indeed, show me the form of him whom I am doomed ——" he could not say to murder.—"That I know not," said the stranger, who, during their conference, had never changed his posture or expression.—"Unfeeling and unyielding as you are," said Ippolito, relapsing into passion, "is this my answer? Is this the way you relieve the wretch whom you upbraid for leaving you? Why should I stay? You have poured fire into my brain, and poison in my heart, and now, when I turn to the only resource you have left me, you mock me with a cold, lingering, doubtful answer. By whatever power you serve and fear, I adjure you, adjure you earnestly, terribly, by the convulsions of a broken spirit, by the ruins of a mind which none but you could bow down to weakness, I adjure you, grant me this last wretched boon; let me grow familiar with the wickedness of my own heart, nor feel these revoltings, as if the motions within me were caused by the possession of a demon!"

The stranger spoke not, moved not, saw not; his arms were uplifted, his head thrown back, the whites only of his eyes were visible; and though not a limb moved, the folds of his garment rose and spread as if they partook of some inward motion. Ippolito, almost insensible of what he saw, and possessed but by one object, repeated his importunities with aggravated vehemence: again and again he grasped the unknown by the arm, and shook his garments, and shrieked his petition in the agonies of delirious impatience.—"Away!" groaned a voice, that seemed to come an immeasurable distance; "away! I am with my master now; he comes; he comes, where space neither measures nor reaches, through the viewless and the void." Ippolito, inflamed, not deterred, only raised his voice and redoubled his eagerness; his feelings became frenzy, his voice a roar; he supplicated, he menaced, he cursed, he defied with daring provocation the presence of the master-spirit, and threatened with extermination the stranger, his ministers, the haunts of their resort, and every agent and instrument of their accursed doings. At this outrage the stranger shivered, and, half starting from his trance, looked around, with a glazed, unawakened eye.—"Who hath brought him here?" he murmured; "the terror of his presence be upon him."—"Let them be upon me!" raved Ippolito; "let me have something to confront and to contend with; I dare him; he shrinks from me; let him come; if he be more terrible than these dens of horror have yet shown me—if he be what I can but behold and die—if he blast my eyes with the livid lightning of hell, let him come; I dare him; does he hear me? yes, I dare him; let the echoes of his temple bear to him my shout, my laugh of defiance." He burst into a horrid laugh.

At these last sounds the stranger shrieked; his shriek, so wild and unearthlike, was echoed from a hundred parts of the vault, and all the crowd of strange shapes, and many he had

never before beheld, surrounded him in a moment; the cavern wrung with their cries; a commotion like an earthquake shook every place and object—self-moved lights darted through the darkness; a sound like the moans of the dying, borne on the wind of midnight, rose, and, increasing as it spread, filled the vault, till the maddened ear sought in vain the cause of its torture in the dizzy roar that oppressed it. Oh, there is no telling the terrors of that hour! if a being could be supposed to be plunged for a moment into Tophet, and retain his vital powers and reason, such, I believe, would he describe it on his return, if the power of description remained to him. I recollect some expressions of Ippolito's, which described it with the energy of personal feeling.—"The very dead forms and characters that were on the walls, at this moment came to a horrid state of partial existence—they crawled and shuddered with a motion like life; the very reptiles, of size and form such as is never seen in the upper world, seemed endued with a strange consciousness, and some rose erect, and some uttered sound, and some looked and stared with ghastly intelligence."

Amid this scene, what an object must Ippolito have presented! the bold and beautiful outline of his figure appearing amid the fires and darkness, and witched shapes of that meeting—his sword drawn, his habit thrown back, his eye and cheek kindling into frenzy, heightened with the peculiar wildness of supernatural terror. The stranger awoke from his trance; he arose; he grasped his arm, and, looking on him with an eye that seemed to see other forms, "Come," said he, "you who compel the powers of the night, and of the nether world, come with me."—"Swear, then, that you will show me that form, the form of him who is to make me a villain; if I can but behold him, I will sit down in passive wretchedness, and resist no more; show me but that form ——"—"You shall behold him."—"Lead me, then, where you will."

Again he was led to a space so remote, that it seemed as if the immense extent of this place was suddenly become doubly immense; yet their motion was so quick, that the rage and uproar seemed to have ceased at once. No sound was near them—their steps did not seem to emit any—the damp and foggy dulness of the coarse medium, which could scarce be called air, seemed to absorb every impression; the single light the stranger bore did not permit them to penetrate into the thick darkness more than the arm could extend. They proceeded in utter silence; there was a chilling remoteness from life within and around them. Ippolito had no consciousness of anything till he found they had stopped and entered a dark chamber, or rather another rude recess in these endless passages. Some object, dark and muffled, lay in a corner; but Ippolito's sight had been too long stimulated by glaring and unnatural impressions to regard it.—"In a few moments," said the unknown, "you will be cursed, like the rest of your species, with the fulfilment of your own wishes; what, in compassion to you, I would have withheld, I can now withhold no longer. The lord of the night, compelled by outrage and defiance, has come—in the fulness of his terrible potency he has come—and I am forced by that presence to deal with you without the mercy of reserve or delay."—"Therefore," said Ippolito, with eager weariness, "I pray you be speedy; soon let me know what is yet to be done or suffered. I tell you I am in the very weakness of desperation! Do not, therefore, speak, for I can no longer hear; my head is hot, and my mind wondrous heavy. Let something be done, and quickly, while I am yet equal to it. I could, methinks, grasp at fire, or drink fresh blood, as if I were in the common ways and habits of nature. How long this searing of the mind will last, I know not; make your tool of me now—I am in your power."—"There is something yet to be done," said the stranger, drawing very near him; "to recognise and to propitiate the presence of our master, a deed must be done—a deed without a name—which sounds foully in the ears of nature. Have you not sometime heard that the power with whom we deal requires the spilling of blood as the test?"—"I have heard of these things before," said Ippolito, speaking quick and low, and fixing his eyes on a point; "and the dreams that used to terrify childhood, are they become the acts of the man?—those things so dark, so distant, are they indeed brought so near to me? Be it so: here is my sword—from what part are the drops to be drawn that seal this mystery of iniquity?" He bared and held out his arm.—"Not that," said the stranger; "it is not that; the sacrifice is already prepared, and you are not to be the victim, but the one who must offer it. Such victims with us are common; credulity or fear supplies them every day."

As he spoke, he approached that obscure object, and drew off part of the covering that concealed it. Ippolito beheld a naked human breast; the rest of the body, head, and limbs were concealed in a dark drapery, that fell also over the rude block, on which it appeared extended and fastened as on an altar. "Here is the victim prepared," said the stranger; "he cannot fly or resist, he cannot discover or upbraid; the movements of the dead are not further from the light or knowledge of life than what is done in this vault; here is the weapon" (giving him a small dagger), "strike firm and sure; the presence of our master requires this attesting act, and all shall then be known."—"Never," replied Ippolito, awaking at once to the keenest and most exalted sense of feeling and reflection, "never; what future horrors my fate may prepare for me I know not, nor what dreadful preparation a goaded mind and a devoted consciousness may steel me with, but while I have sense, and can hold a weapon with the steady hand of one who can aim, or who can forbear, never shall such an accursed deed be done by me."—"Rash boy!" said the unknown, "you know not what depends on this moment; you know not whose presence makes these insensible walls burst out in an ominous dew, and this prepared taper burn tremulous and blue; you know not who beholds you now, summoned hither by the outrage, and now dismissed with the capricious infirmity of a mortal—his wrath will be terrible, my power will fail before him, his fangs will scatter your flesh like chaff, his breath will blast and shrivel your substance to an atom, you will be borne alive to his horrible haunt, the mock of his taloned imps, the torn, shrieking, and yet living feast of fiends."—"I hear your words," said Ippolito; "but my ears are stopped with horrid things, and I cannot distinguish them, nor am I longer able to speak or to reason. I will not do that accursed thing; I will not harm that miserable object, though he can neither resist nor upbraid; for myself, I am in his hands, whose hands can reach even here."—"Think, oh, yet think," continued the unknown, "of the alternative that awaits your obstinacy, if the more direful and violent extremity should not overtake you; you must never quit this vault again—never. No human force or art can ever find or free you; here you must linger on the confines of the outer darkness, feeding despair with fearful shapes and sounds, so very near the nether world, that the horrid familiarity will make you forget your nature; and even while yet alive and in the flesh, feel yourself becoming a demon, till on such a night as this you shall be nailed to a block like him, whom similar infirmity has brought here, to be put to a death you can neither see nor struggle against; and then to lie here, your rotting bones made instruments of such unhallowed doings, that their dead juices shall creep and curdle to be so abused, while no friend weeps or knows your end, and your miserable soul unabsolved, unblessed, unappeased. Oh, think of this!"—"I have thought—it is in vain; if one of your goblin ministers were howling temptation in my ears, while these horrors leave me a glimpse of will or reason, while I can draw a dagger or not draw it, I will not be a tame, resigned, voluntary villain."

"'Tis possible," said the tempter, "the malice of mercy may spare you to a worse fate; 'tis possible you may be dismissed from this chamber, to linger out a long life of horrible expectation, for such it must be, with the consciousness of future guilt. You will neither have the preparation of definite knowledge to enable you to dare it with firmness, and to suffer with dignity, nor that partial reconcilement which long familiarity must produce with the most revolting objects, and which, if it do not leave the mind satisfied, at least renders it calm. No; instead of this, conscious that you must be guilty, you will try many modes of guilt, partly from curiosity, and partly from a vain hope to evade your allotted one; thus will you become hardened in evil, familiar with varieties of vice. Your mind, from its habitual contemplations, will be degraded below that of an assassin or a robber. The contagion will extend to your manners and habits; your whole character will sink into a squalid misery, a depraved dejection, a desponding meanness, a ruffian abandonment. Never knowing when you arise that the sun will not light you to a shameful death, you will bear for ever about you the curse and blast of existence, the self-watching torture of fear, that dreads to wake and dreads to sleep. In the morning you shall wish for evening, and in the evening you shall wish for morning, anxious for the day to pass that you may see it over, without a crime, yet cursing it when it is past, that it has brought you nearer to inevitable misery. In every wind you will hear cries of pursuit, in every eye you will see a spy or an accuser; every straw that crosses your path shall seem like a weapon offered to you—the infant and the sleeper shall suggest to you a whisper of

temptation; your character, your feelings, your nature changed—low in vice and in wretchedness—you will crawl with conscious revoltings to the end of a long, long life—you will rush, shrieking with precipitate reluctance, on its guilty close, and you will perish in the sin for which the horrors of uncertain anticipation allowed you no time for repentance, and the degradation of your heart forbade the praise of fortitude or the solace of compassion. Such must be your life if you quit this chamber without seeing the face of your victim. But it is now in your power to command that sight, and if you do, its appearance will suggest to you so many circumstances of time, and place, and action, that you will have means to collect your powers; your arm will be strong, your mind bold and awake, your energies collected, keen, intense; you will be undisturbed by the rage of ignorance, the stupid curses of the vulgar; you will walk with a steady step to the end of life, and quit it with the mysterious dignity of one who, possessing a knowledge above nature, was enabled to act a part above it; who, knowing more than mere man could know, acted as mere man could never have acted. And is not this worth the struggle of a moment?"

While he spoke he had insinuated the dagger into Ippolito's hand, who, in the unconscious workings of his mind and body, grasped it intensely. The strong picture of wretched life was before his eyes, his heart was hot, and desperate, and reckless. Before he knew the direction his hand had taken, he felt the blood gushing about the hilt of the dagger; he heard the stifled, and broken, and peculiar moan of death; he staggered and shut his eyes, he felt as if they were forced open again; he looked, but could see nothing—there was a dead silence. At length Ippolito stammered out, "I have done it! now fulfil what you promised, now let me see that figure."—"You shall," said the stranger, in a voice whose tone made itself felt even in that most horrible moment; "withdraw that covering and you shall behold it."—"Where! what! I am amazed! my head is throbbing—speak—quickly."—"Withdraw that covering and you shall behold the face of your victim."—"Are you mad, or am I? What connexion can there be between this miserable object and him whose form I was to see?"—"Look, and you shall see the very object, self, and form; not express, but actual." With hands that did not feel their own motion, he withdrew the covering from the face; it was dimmed and altered by the struggles of death, but he saw it; in that pale light, and with eyes that were seared and flashing, he knew it.

"What did he see?" demanded the inquisitor.—"I know not; whenever he but approaches the mention of it his hand becomes illegible, his expressions grow wild. It is in vain to importune him for that name, he could as soon bring himself wittingly to do the deed itself as disclose the object or circumstance of it, even to a brother."—"What change of sorcery," said the inquisitor, "what dark dealing is this? How could the sufferer in the wizard's vault, and the being he was doomed to destroy at some future time, be the same? or how ——"—"And still more strange," said Angellini, "from allusions in subsequent passages I can collect, that the dying face he saw in the vault was the face of a living man—a man yet living in this world, in no expectation or chance of death; nay, one who could by no means be supposed to be in or near that place, one who is yet alive and well known to him, though he had felt his hands stiff with his blood, though he had seen the drawn features—the close set teeth—the broken and reverted eye, with all the terrible charactery of actual death upon him."

"It is all a riddle, dark and fearful. But still, was not his mind lightened by the thought that what had passed that night could be but in vision? that if his victim was yet alive he could not have perished in that dark chamber? Did no hope of deception, of imposture, of the infirmity of his senses, spring up within him?"—"Oh, no; it was only misery heightened by anticipation and confirmed by certainty. He had read, and so have I, when perhaps our motive to such studies was curiosity, of some potent workings of that art by which the spirits of the living are, with unheard of anguish to the sufferer, brought to the place and the power that requires them, and there are made or seem to undergo in vision and mist whatever can be inflicted on the real corporeal agent; and that during this fearful divorce of soul and body that the latter remains as in a deep sleep which nothing can disturb or interrupt till its suffering tenant is restored by the power that divided them. Such things have we heard, and what would make the hair stand upright if told, of the tortures of the more subtle part, whose powers of sensation are rendered inconceivably acute by this unnatural dissolution, to whom

the state itself is a state of dark, dream-like suffering, through which they labour with a feeling of oppression, feverous and dim, and dense, such as accompanies the presence of the nightmare. To such a cause he persists to ascribe the appearances in the vault, for he firmly believes that terrible stranger a being not of this earth. Nor have I any means of contending with his belief; his actions and character, so far as I have been told of them, have lapped me in wonder."—"Oh, blessed Mother! blessed Mother, have mercy on him! heal his mind and forgive his sins. Holy St Agatha, have mercy! Holy St Rosolia, have mercy on him!" He beat his breast and crossed himself, and Angellini joined in his aspirations. "These papers," said he, after a pause, "I have since received, are all sudden starts of pain and terror, without connexion, without subject. See how they are written, how the hand must have trembled that wrote these."

FRAGMENTS OF LETTERS FROM IPPOLITO TO ANGELLINI.

"My mind is become utterly waste and desolate; existence lies before me without form or colour. I am the man whose fate has been made known to him, who has no part in life but its close—whose thoughts bear him over the whole earth, without a passing glance, and set him down before the grave. And mine, where shall it be dug? Ay, there is the sting of death! I must lie in the dust, in the shadow of the gibbet and the wheel! Dying villains shall pray that their bones may not be thrown near mine. Oh, if this must be, that I could wrap my head in darkness, in deep deathlike sleep, and pass away the term without a thought till my hour came on, and then to rush with blind arm, with headlong blow that is struck before it is felt, and at the same moment to feel it returned home to my heart sure and firm, before recollection return, while I am yet in the doubt of a horrid dream, before I hear the wonder, and the cry, and the tale; before I feel the cursed gaze of mankind on me, straining to see the murderer. And then to lie down forgotten for ever, clean passed away from note or memory of man, my name unknown, my grave in the sands of a desert. Oh, that it might be thus! for though I must perish by a ruffian's fate I have not a ruffian's heart. No, it is the very omnipotence of fate to thwart, to humble, to crush, to mix opposites that loathe each other, to bid the proud heart become acquainted with pollution and abject wretchedness. Never was a heart that kindled as mine did with the love of all that is dear to the young, the ardent, the high-principled mind. My race of pleasure and glory seemed to be endless; it was but next spring to quit the levities of Naples, to enter as a cadet, with an assumed name, into the Spanish service, and never to avow that of Montorio till the commandant should ask the name of the youth who had done some distinguished service—this was my purpose. And I must perish on a scaffold, or in a dungeon, where lives are crushed out in silence and darkness! No, here there is no hope; no dignity can be given to an end like this, no decent pride of death. To die for some act that was the burst of passion, the excess of erring principle; to see among the multitude a thousand whose hearts are with you, who weep, and pray for, and bless you, as your firm step ascends the scaffold; nay, to struggle madly for the chance of life—to grapple with the executioner—to spring over the edge of the platform—to dash with chains through the guard—to trust to the sympathy of the sheltering crowd for your escape; to do this, while only conscious of erring as many have erred, would be to me more delightful than life. But, pitiless heaven, must I be dragged with the meanness of guilt, the villain visage, in whose lines I shall hear them, as I crawl along, tracing the characters of vice; my felon hands tied behind, while the confessor, shuddering at the monster, can hardly bid him not despair. This—this—oh, blessed heaven! let me run mad! Will he not take these burning tears, this scattered hair, this broken heart, and spare me but the foul deed, spare me but the shame, the public curse, the public gaze, and I will bear the pain silently, deeply, while nature will bear it!———

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"I am much in solitude; when I am forced to go amongst men, I often feel myself examining their faces with a suspicion that makes them shrink, and me too when I am conscious of it. I am therefore much in solitude, for who can bear the sight of the human face when once it has become offensive? Horrid thought is my only companion! the worst of that came to me last night. Was it only a passing thought of fear, or was it one of those dark intima-

tions that latterly, I think, often visit me? A mind in my state may well be conceived a fit medium for the agency of unearthly natures. I thought for a moment I was possessed; I did for a moment think it. In truth, there are such fightings within me—I feel I am yet so unlike what I am told I must be—my head has so many thoughts so like my former self—my heart has still so many pulses that are yet alive to the love of grace, that I almost doubt if ever I can wittingly do the unnatural deed—if ever I can have the heart to be a wretch. When these thoughts rise in me I try to crush them; I shriek, I stamp, I beat my head, I say with a horrid laugh, these are no thoughts for the murderer. I must be wild, reckless, hard as the rock, rough as the storm. I try to chase these cruel lingerings of my former nature and be thoroughly, inveterately the wretch I ought to be. It was in such a struggle last night (that almost drove me to pray for the consummation of my wretchedness), for a moment I thought I was possessed—that the evil one had not utterly prevailed, that I would feel him hourly growing stronger within me, drying up the springs of nature, searing my conscience and shutting up my soul till—oh! language cannot follow that thought. I was standing when it came to me, and I feared to look into the glass opposite me, lest I should see my breath inflamed, or my eyes glisten with strange intelligence, or my hairs pointed and tipt with fire, or my foot——oh, this cannot, cannot surely last much longer!———

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"I thought that I felt the worst—that long anticipation had made me familiar with all horrors; that, in thought, I had drank the dregs and wrung them out. I was deceived—for our capacity of bearing pain is always deceiving us. Whom could I have believed, who would have told me what I could support a short space back? Last night I had thought long on it—I went to bed—I slept: I dreamt that I had done it, that I had in very deed done it. Every hair on my head I felt distinctly upright, every nerve and muscle was strained and stiffened out, my eyes were coals of fire, my fingers were distended into talons, I was drenched with the sweat of deadly agony. Even in my sleep I felt I said, 'Oh, reverse time but for one moment! let this be but to come; let me be the thrall of horrible expectation for ever.' Sleep could not long continue. I awoke—awoke in transport—awoke exclaiming, 'I am not a murderer!' It was long before my senses returned perfectly, but when they did I remembered ere long I must feel this, and seek to waken from it in vain. Oh, then I wished to pass life in such a dream, so I might never waken to such a conviction. My reason is much obscured, mine eyes are strained and burning, mine ears have a roar in them like that of ocean that is never diminished. Nature is dark to me, and mankind a spectre. Yet, yet my sufferings are but begun———

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"For some time past I had a wretched resource, such as wretches have. Even that has failed me utterly. The events that have befallen me, the objects that surround me nightly, bear so little resemblance to reality, that often they appeared to me the images of a dream, a dark, haunted dream. For a moment I dared to think I was not doomed to be a murderer. In the morning those objects were as clear and palpable as any action I had ever witnessed or performed; at evening, with the help of wine and high play, to which I forced myself, they became doubtful, and sometimes disappeared. What must that be to which the rage of drunkenness and gaming is a relief? But last night and the night before he appeared to me amid crowds, to whom I had run for shelter in vain; he reminded me of the hour—he showed me the dagger—he scared all around—he bore me away. Oh, when I saw him break the last fence I had against him, I felt like the wrecked wretch who, at nightfall, lights his few fagots to deter the wild beasts from approaching him, and sees by their blaze the tiger couching to spring over them and seize him. I have no power of resistance, no hope of escape—I am the prey of the powers of darkness! Oh, how terrible is this sinking of the soul, this closing round of the utter darkness."

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Angellini was proceeding to examine more of these extraordinary papers, when he and his companion were startled by an unusual sound that murmured near them. They listened not in apprehension, for within the walls of the Inquisition there are no listeners but in curiosity. At that moment Angellini observed a remarkable change in the appearance of the sea, which was flowing beneath their windows; it suddenly retreated to a vast distance, leaving its bed

bare and heaving, and stranding in a moment the numberless small vessels which were sailing or anchored in it in total security, and whose bulged and scattered fragments were spread over the surface as far as it was yet visible. Angellini and his companion were too well acquainted with the climate to be ignorant of the purport of these dreadful phenomena, and if they had, the loud and terrible cry that rose from the city and the shore would not have allowed them to be long so. They now could see distinctly crowds of people rushing to the shore from every quarter; they ran for refuge and safety, for in their houses it appeared impossible to continue longer; but when they found the beach naked, the vessels destroyed, and the sea receding almost from their view, they stood aghast, and eyed each other in speechless despair.

Angellini, endeavouring to subdue the terrors of nature by the discharge of his official duties, recollected that unless the shocks were unusually violent, it was probable the fabric would resist them; and that at least, while any work of man remained, a pile which had stood for centuries would be safe. While he was yet debating the probable direction of the next shock, he was stunned by a sound, which he in vain endeavoured to believe proceeded from the multitude on the shore; it was the ocean returning in its strength—in a strength that seemed to threaten the bounds of nature. In the next moment they beheld it approaching as a mountain, the black concave of its waters darkening on the view like a cavern. Angellini, who was hastening from the room, stood rivetted to the spot for an instant of horrible expectation. It burst, and he felt the building shake to its base. It yet stood, however, and he rushed out to order the guard to remove the prisoners, who were lodged in chambers hollowed out of the rock, beneath the foundations of the fabric, where he feared the sea, in these convulsive workings, might penetrate, and the inhabitants of them perish miserably. He gave his orders eagerly to the proper officer, who, bowing profoundly, assured him "the prisoners were perfectly safe."—"Safe!" repeated Angellini, "they are safe, indeed, from the power of man; but I wish to put them in a capacity of avoiding the most deplorable of all modes of destruction."—"With submission, signor, I apprehend it would be better policy to leave them where they are," said the officer. "Policy!" said Angellini, with some indignation, "this is rather a moment for humanity."—"Of that I do not pretend to be a judge, said the officer; but were the prisoners of my mind, they would rather die where they are than live to perish at the stake."

Angellini had but just time to repeat his orders, when a second and a third shock made the walls around him vibrate visibly, while a large aperture yawning in that opposite him, he beheld through it the towers of the fabric tottering, and the inner court strewn with fragments of battlements and columns. All was now confusion and horror; the cries of the sufferers from the town were audible amid the tumult of destruction; but on the ministers of the Inquisition, callous from habitual misery, and frozen by a life of monotony, the effect was much diminished in point of terror and consternation: they moved with that stalking silence with which they traversed the passages on ordinary occasions. The prisoners, whose situation exposed them to danger, were, by Angellini's direction, placed in a court, where, though guarded, their motions were at liberty, should they be necessary to their own safety. Angellini, when half an hour had elapsed without a renewal of danger, began to examine the structure, whose gigantic strength had resisted a shock that had almost laid a city in ruins. The tower alone seemed shattered by the concussion; its inner front, which faced the court, was marked with some traces of injury. but the outer wall seemed shaken into ruins, for Angellini saw the bare and pointed ridges of the roof, and caught the gleams of the outer sky through the gratings which light had never penetrated before. He hastily demanded, had any one been confined in that tower? and was told it had been the prison of the young nobleman from Naples. He instantly ordered some of the officers to ascend the remains of the staircase that hung fearfully pendulous and visible on the outside of the fractured wall. They obeyed him; but, after some delay, returned with horror in their faces, affirming that of the prisoner there was not a vestige in any part of the building; they averred also, that it was impossible for him to have escaped by human means, for their own approach to his apartment had been only rendered practicable by the falling in of part of the building as they were ascending the stairs, which had enabled them, with some difficulty and danger, to reach and find his chamber empty.

From the looks and gestures which accompanied this information, and the whispers with

which it was continued, the prisoners conjectured that it contained other circumstances still more extraordinary. Angellini, when it was concluded, raising his eyes to the ruin, so fearful and impassable, thought, with a mixture of horror and compassion on the mysterious fate of this unfortunate young man, and for a moment submitted his strong mind to the belief of the marvellous things superstition had told of him.

VOLUME IV.

CHAPTER I.

"I am now come from gazing on the sight:
From bank to bank the red swoln river roars.
Crowds now are standing upon either shore
In awful silence, not a sound is heard
But the flood's awful voice, and from the city
A dismal bell heard through the air by starts."

When Annibal, still attended by Filippo, arrived at Capua, he learned that his relative resided at Puzzoli, where he had been removed for the enjoyment of a distinguished benefice. Disappointed by the delay, and alarmed by the danger of exposure, he nevertheless was compelled, by the exigency of his finances, to pursue to Puzzoli this relative, who was his mother's uncle. Annibal had from his youth been a favourite; and what was of greater consequence, his father had long been the reverse, in consequence of some family disagreements; both from his fondness and resentment, therefore, he hoped for assistance, and, at least, believed himself secure of confidence and protection.

He therefore hastened to Puzzoli, and rested on his way at a small town in its neighbourhood, purporting to reach it the following day. Slight shocks of the preceding earthquake had been felt in the country, and a considerable degree of alarm prevailed among the inhabitants, which, as usual, they endeavoured to appease by ceremonies and processions. A river, that flowed near the town, had lately undergone such extraordinary changes, had swoln with such sudden violence, and then subsided without any apparent cause, that the people were not only terrified with the expectation of what these changes indicated, but with the more obvious danger it threatened to their lives and habitations. Annibal, who was shown into a room of the inn which commanded a view of the river, saw not without solicitude and fear the rush of its dark, turbid waters, sometimes wrought into eddies, and sometimes checked by invisible obstructions, its roar often mingled with other sounds, of which the causes were unknown, and its waters flushed with the sullen sanguine hues of a sun, setting amid the clouds of a gathering storm. "Illustrious signor," said the host, entering with preparations for supper, "you have arrived at the most fortunate time imaginable; we have had threatenings of an earthquake and inundations these four days."—"You flatter me highly," said Annibal, jocularly.—"May I perish if I do, signor!" said the man earnestly; "I think it by no means improbable that this roof may be in ruins over your head to-night.—"You must explain the mystery of this good fortune to me," said Annibal, smiling; "I confess I am unable to comprehend how being buried in the ruins of your house is a subject on which I can congratulate myself."—"Why, signor, is it possible you can live in Italy, and not know that whenever we are threatened with danger the abbess of the Ursuline convent, and the prior of our monastery, unite in a solemn procession to the river, and produce all their relics to prevent an inundation; and that ceremonies are performed, and crowds collected, and such a multitude of strangers and spectators pours into the town to witness it, that if the inundation swept away half of the town, the remainder are happier for it all their life? It is quite a jubilee, I assure you, signor, only that it occurs somewhat oftener; if Providence continues to favour us, as it has done of late, I expect to see scarce a house standing."—"You will allow me, however," said Annibal, "to quit yours before so desirable an event occurs, as I should be equally unwilling to prevent or to partake its good fortune."

Shocked at the man's insensibility, and determined not to augment profits thus iniquitously desired, he quitted the house and wandered towards the river. It was now night, deepened by the darkness of a cloudy sky, and Annibal's mind, under the influence of time and place,

involuntarily adopted a subject of congenial meditation. He thought of his strange fate, of events no conjecture could solve, and no contemplation could divest of terror; the precise frame of his mind was critical and dangerous, perhaps even more so than his brother's. Ippolito was always accustomed to act from impulse, Annibal from conviction. But impulse is more variable than conviction; and therefore, though Ippolito's emotions were more vehement, his mind was much more disengaged than his brother's. He had no distinct belief of the character of his persecutor, nor any clear impressions of the influence exercised on himself; he had never seriously debated whether it was the production of human or superhuman powers; he resisted it merely because it was painful and atrocious; instead of bending his mind to discover whether he was the victim of imposture or the agent of destiny, he expended his energies in sallies of rage and convulsions of resistance.

Into the deeper mind of Annibal one conviction had radically wrought itself, that of his being visited by the inmate of another world. What relief he had enjoyed under this terrible impression was merely local and furtive, produced by change of place and vicissitudes of action violent and sudden; but the impression remained slumbering, but not extinct, ready to resume its force and character whenever the cause that had produced it should recur. Hence, while Ippolito was almost in despair, his very violence of nature formed a security against the object he dreaded, as poison is often expelled by the convulsions it produces; while Annibal, whose tranquillity seemed almost unimpaired, nourished an unsuspected tendency to the very deed from whose remote apprehension the frame of his mind flattered him with a treacherous immunity. He walked alone. His mental debate, which occupied some hours, might be reduced to the following propositions,—"I have seen a departed spirit, an inhabitant of those regions which are invisible to man; I cannot resist the evidences of his appearance and ministry; I draw them as much from the circumstances that preceded and followed as from those that accompanied it. There was a regularity of disposition, a subordination of parts, a progress of developement, which indicate the agency of an intelligent being, and if intelligent certainly not human. He prompts me to a crime, revolting to nature and fatal to my own life, reputation, and perhaps immortal interests. I have resisted him, for it requires no debate to reject evil so positive and heinous; I have resisted him hitherto; but who can tell how long he may resist a being whose powers are the powers of another world? nay, who can tell how far he is right in resisting him? Distance of place has in a measure relieved me from this persecution; but should he pursue me where I am flying, I feel I have no further resource, no remaining powers of defence; the evidence of his character, the truth of his commission, it will then be no longer possible to resist. Far be that day from me, oh heaven! In my present state my misery is solitary and incommunicable; I have no associate—I can have none; for unimaginable distress there is no sympathy; he who has felt as I do might pity me, but where shall I find him? What being is there who holds communication authentic and avowed with the world of spirits? None! The tenderest friend or relative must regard me as a visionary, a madman, or an impostor, and to my other sufferings I need not voluntarily add contempt. To implore the aids of the church is equally hopeless, the consequence of confession would probably be imprisonment in the Inquisition; they would listen to me, not as one for whom something was to be done but from whom something was to be learned; they would listen to the tale of suffering or of guilt, only for the sake of considering how far the interests of the church might be promoted by the issue of the affair. I should be ever afterwards to them an object of vigilance and suspicion; they would presume on my distress to predominate over my freedom and my intellects—they would macerate my body and enfeeble my mind, and, after all, if my persecution be not a visionary one, they would fail to protect me from it, and if it be I am able to protect myself."

He was pleased with the result of his meditation; for though he had not adopted any resolution he had appeared to think with the vigour of resolution; he had in fact anchored without a bottom; but the increasing crowds and noise would have prevented any further exercise of mind, had he been disposed to it. He found, according to his host's account, multitudes assembled, and multitudes more assembling, though it was now near midnight, and the appearance both of the sky and the waters was menacing. They heeded it not; the triumph of seeing their saints acquainting the river in the rage of inundation, "that thus far should he go and no further," was heightened by the increased wealth and consequence which this con-

fluence of strangers gave their town, and both were exalted by that love of pleasure and sensibility of external objects, for which the Italians are distinguished, and which the desire to gratify must be incalculably powerful in a people who enjoy but few spectacles of splendour or opportunities of festivity but what religion affords them. Annibal was drawn along by the crowd, and learned among them that the abbess and her train were to come from a neighbouring convent with relics of peculiar virtue; that they were to be met at the entrance of the town by the religious orders who inhabited it; and that both were to march with united forces to the very brink of the river, and pronounce a solemn interdiction of its further outrages. Annibal, who was a good catholic, believed his mind would be refreshed as well as his senses delighted by this act of religion, and therefore willingly mingled in the crowd, amused even by the preparations for the ceremony, by the murmur and concourse of so vast a multitude, over whose visages, tinged with various shadowings of confidence and fear, the torches by which they were seen, flung an expression wildly animated and picturesque.

Through the darkness of the night he could see distinctly the lights that twinkled from the convent, and often he listened to catch the chaunt of their solemn service as the low, intermitted gale breathed past him, but could only hear the roarings of the river, which filled up the hushed murmurs of the crowd with a sound strange and deep; at length a bell from the convent, which was caught and answered by those in the town, gave signal that the procession had set out. The crowd pressed forward to meet and join it, and Annibal was borne on by the rest. It was marked by every circumstance of fantastic splendour by which the unhappy inmates of a convent try to diversify hopeless monotony, and employ the talents which are denied their proper and social exercise. All the wealth of the convent was displayed, several nuns were arrayed in the habits and characters of those whose relics they bore. The abbess herself, assisted by four lay sisters, supported an enormous piece of tapestry, embroidered with the life of their patroness, St Ursula, whose figure in wax, larger than the life, and blazing with jewels, followed in the rear of her own achievements. But the multitude forgot every other object when the procession closed with a figure, such as their eyes never before had beheld; it was a lay-sister, habited as the genius of martyrdom, and bearing a relic of more value than the whole wealth of the convent; it was the head of St Catharine, which, by particular providence, had found its way from Alexandria, where it had been severed from her body in the reign of the tyrant Maximin, to Italy.

This saint had a special antipathy to inundations and earthquakes, which she took care to manifest in so spirited a manner, that the river had upon all former occasions paid the highest deference to her hydrophobia, by instantly retreating to its natural current. This inestimable relic, set in gold, and placed in a crystal case, never had attracted the attention of the faithful so little. They hung upon, they blessed, they almost worshipped the beautiful representative of martyrdom. She was placed aloft, on a car of curious construction; it was entirely composed of racks, crosses, and instruments of death and torture, woven with such skilful intricacy as to preserve their distinct forms, and yet form a spacious vehicle. At due intervals imps of temptation and punishment were peeping at the genius, with faces of ugly malignity and derisive grimace. She stood in the centre of the machine, in the attitude of trampling on the terrible apparatus, on which she cast from time to time looks of contempt, such as the serenity of angelic beauty may spare. A robe of white floated round her like a cloud; one hand held the head of St Catharine, the other waved a branch of amaranth; her locks were wreathed with a coronal of palms, and her eyes were upturned to a resplendent figure, which, bending from the canopy of purple, extended to her a crown of gems, and pointed her view to heaven. Her form breathed immortality, her vestments seemed to emit light, as they moved on a face pale with early confinement and habitual sorrow. The murmurs of adoration, the awakened consciousness of beauty, and the enthusiasm of religious drama, had kindled a radiance that seemed borrowed from the regions her view was directed to. The faithful felt their devotion exalted, and the libertine was converted as they beheld her. By a singular chance, her face was concealed from Annibal as her car passed the spot where he stood. He was again borne on by the multitude, who hastened to the river, on the bank of which the religious orders were already assembled, the solemn sound of their chanting mixing with its roar, and their line of dark forms, so diversified by the shadowy picturings *of torchlight, here* heaped in tumultuous darkness, and there flashing out in abrupt and fan-

tastic light, that the eye sought in vain for a resemblance to known or common objects, and struggled to believe itself in the regions of life. After prayer and hymn the various relics were exposed; that of St Catharine was reserved for the last. At length the genius descended, and through crowds that prostrated themselves before her in doubtful devotion, advanced to the brink of the river. After a short prayer she exposed the sacred head to the waters, and waved it with a gesture of inspiring command. At that moment the night and the dark surface of the waters were swept by a glare of sudden light—a meteor, low-hung and lurid, passed over the upturned visages of the multitude, and disappearing in the darkness, left a train of bluish sparkles behind. The crowd, in the joy of confidence, believing it to be a signal of divine acceptance, burst into a shout of triumph; and the genius, flushed with the radiance of inspiration, turned to ascend her car, with a step that seemed to discard the earth. Her veil floated back with the elevation of her motion. Annibal beheld her face without a shade or interruption, it was the face of Erminia, the original of the picture cherished by fantastic passion, and preserved without a hope of discovery. Carried beyond himself, he rushed through the crowd—he called on her, in a voice the murmur of thousands could not suppress—he addressed her in alternate rapture and awe—he invoked her as an angel of light, and supplicated her as the beloved of his heart. The crowd, incensed and astonished, collected round him in numbers, which he strove to break through in vain; but still he contended, expostulated, and entreated; and holding out the picture, bid them behold a resistless witness of the truth of his passion, and the identity of its object. The crowd still surrounded and repelled; but he still spoke with more vivid eloquence, more animated passion, for he could perceive, at this moment, that the object he addressed, amid the pomp of procession and the triumph almost of deification, had paused, and beheld him with a look in which surprise was quite unmixed with anger. Emboldened, he burst from the crowd with sudden strength, and implored her but to pause, but to listen. His story was wild, but true. He had seen her picture where she had perhaps never been; he had devoted his heart to the resemblance, and his life to the pursuit of her; he had unexpectedly, miraculously, found her, and again he poured out before her, in tones no woman could hear unmoved, his passion, heightened by visionary feeling and romantic discovery.

But at this moment the murmurs of the crowd, and the angry interference of the ecclesiastics, were lost in an universal roar of horror, and a rush of sudden flight that, like the torment it shunned, bore everything before it. The river, with no physical cause, but subterraneous and invisible convulsions, suddenly rose with the rage of a tempest, and bearing down bank and mound, poured a waste of watery ruin on every side. There is a darkness of distress, a helplessness of resistance, an obscurity of fear, in the dread of perishing by water, such as are not found in even more terrible modes of destruction; but here, where safety was obstructed by multitudes, and the horrors of desolation were aggravated by recent triumph—where the eye dreaded even darkness as danger, and the foot knew not in what element its next step would be plunged, the confusion and terror were beyond all power of description, and Annibal felt himself hurried into involuntary safety, while his eyes were yet strained to discover the situation of her, to perish with whom was the only thought of the moment. The torrent of flight, however, which he resisted in vain, never ceased, till he was almost in the centre of the town, where the bed-rid and diseased were at that moment lamenting their absence from a ceremony from which they never could have escaped with life. Here the crowd paused, to be assured of their safety; and Annibal, taking advantage of the first power of voluntary motion, hastened back to the spot which he feared he would now visit in vain. He was often obstructed by groups of fugitives, who still ran, though they were far from danger; but when he came near the brink of the water, which was now extended to the suburbs of the town, all was desolation, still and dark, save for the hoarse dashing of the waters, contending with obstructions it had not yet removed, and the solitary, intermitted shriek of some wanderer, whom even the terrors of the scene could not drive away from calling on the names of those they could hope to see no more, and pausing to distinguish was it the cry of death, or only the sullen rush of the water that answered them. He had wandered along the margin of the waters, sometimes climbling over the remains of half-demolished buildings, and sometimes wading through shallows encumbered by corses. He had no name to call on, and over the dark and tossing waste before him no power of sight could discover anything but occasional

streaks of light, where the yet unextinguished torches blazed on casual eminences, or were suspended from casements, to assist the sufferers. At length, on a bank, he descried a number of people, who appeared to have forgotten their personal sufferings in some object of distinguished distress; when he reached the spot he discovered it.

The ruins of a bridge, which had once joined the shore, were now scarce seen in the midtide of the stream; arch after arch had yielded to the force of the torrent, and but a segment of the last yet remained, over whose rent and tottering fragments every successive burst of the flood left a trace of foam higher than the last; a form was visible on the extreme ridge; sometimes it was seen, with a despairing hand, to wave a part of its garment towards the shore, from which it was only answered with outspread arms and fruitless cries. Annibal, bending from the bank, gazed on it; his sight, quickened by fear, could not fail: with a cry, in which anguish was wildly mixed with joy, he tore off his mantle and plunged into the stream. He was a dexterous and bold swimmer, but had never before encountered such difficulties. The currents were adverse and irregular, the depths uncertain, and the obstacles (arising from fragments of trees, buildings, and human corses, which floated on the tide or rose in eddying masses) were such as neither skill nor strength could easily contend with; but, as he struggled onward, every moment stimulated his efforts, for every moment the form became more distinct and the distress more acute. With incredible exertions, he had reached the single and tottering arch; he grasped its projecting fragments, which he felt loose in his grasp, and, in accents scarce audible, besought her to throw herself into his arms, while yet it was possible for him to save her. In the stupor of fear, she appeared to listen, without a capacity of effort, till fragment after fragment crumbling from her hold, and the dashing of the spray rising to her breast, and Annibal's despairing adjurations, almost lost in the deepening rush of the waters, she ceased to cling to the ruin, rather from weakness than energy, and sank into his arms. He received her with a mixture of joy and terror; but when he saw the dark waste he had to repass, his strength diminished, his burthen increased, and the roar of the waters deepening round him, his heart sank within him, and his efforts became the blind strivings of despair. Still, however, he struggled onward, but obstructions increased; he had no longer any definite point to fix on or to reach—the shore seemed removed to an endless distance. He plunged on without regular effort or object, till anguish succeeding to hope, and courage exhausted on invincible difficulty, all recollection forsook him, and he dimly remembered, as in a dream, that he still held her he could no longer save, even when the waters were closing over their heads, and to perish together was all that hope could promise.

When he recovered his faculties, he believed himself in the regions of death; all was dark, and cold, and silent. He lay for some moments in strange expectation, till he felt the warmth of life returning, and was assured that he still existed. He arose, he felt his limbs stiff and drenched, but capable of motion; he felt his way before him, and his hands touched walls that were damp and stony: he called aloud, but his voice was repressed, as if by low roofs and a contracted space. As he still proceeded, he distinctly perceived steps retreating before him; he called again on the person he believed so near him, and was answered by a faint cry of fear from a voice that made him pursue it as if he were winged. At that moment the vault he was traversing opening above his head, the first beams of a wan, beclouded moon, fell through the chasm, and discovered a female figure standing near him in an attitude of flight and terror. Annibal advanced, and the female again attempted to fly, though evidently scarce able to stand. Annibal flung himself on his knees, and throwing away his sword, addressed her in a voice and attitude to disarm all fear; he adjured her not to fly from one who had lately hazarded life to preserve her; he mingled the tenderness of passion with the strength of reason—told her, that amid danger to fly from protection was madness, and whispered that to convert that protection into a duty, and to sanction love by religion, had been the purpose that animated his search, and that, even now, made darkness and terror delightful, since they favoured the opportunity of urging it. The lady made no reply, but listened with that gracious silence more flattering than speech to the pleadings of a lover. Annibal now venturing to rise and approach her, implored her to permit him to lead her to some place of safety, and to avail herself of the opportunity yet afforded them by disclosing her name and circumstances. "By those long and beautiful tresses," said he, venturing to touch them, "I perceive you are *not yet a nun; flatter* the boldness this moment teaches me, and tell me you never will be one.

what he knew of his own dark persecution. When he had dismissed Filippo, though it was now night, he hastened back to the convent, to gaze on the walls that enclosed Ildefonsa, and enjoy that nameless delight which passion indulges in being near those it cannot see. The night was dark; he wandered round the walls at an unsuspected distance, till, grown bold from security, he approached close to them; and as light after light disappeared from the narrow windows, delighted himself with thinking he could discover the habitation of Ildefonsa, or imagine her employments, among which he dreamed a thought of him might sometimes steal upon the solemnity of mingled worship, or the lonely orisons of the cell. As he yet lingered, the noise of something falling lightly at his feet aroused him; he stooped and picked up a flower, which, as he held in his hand, he perceived to contain a small paper buried in the petal. He in vain endeavoured to distinguish the writing, but convinced that it contained something more than fancy had yet promised, he hastened back to the inn, guarding the paper by a thousand superfluous precautions, and calling for a taper, locked himself in his apartment, and sat down to feast in solitude.

The billet, which was intricately folded, contained the following lines:—"Whether I am wrong in writing thus, I know not, but I fear I shall scarce condemn myself if I am. If I do not misunderstand your expressions, they intimate that I am to you the object of a passion which I yet know only by name, but of which I fear I shall not much longer be ignorant. Thus dangerous is it to see you; but greater dangers beset and terrify me. I am surrounded by enemies and by snares, which alone I resist in vain. Helpless and dismayed, I fly to the first arm that is extended for protection. Should you betray me, remember there is no honour in oppressing solitary weakness. The same reasons impel me to fear and trust to you. Heaven protect me, I know not what to do! At the extremity of the west wall of the garden there is a breach, occasioned by the late commotions, which has not yet been repaired; it is almost concealed by laurel and arbutus, but to-morrow night there will be a moon, and you can discover it. I will be there, for liberty to walk in the garden till a late hour is still allowed me. I write by stealth and with difficulty; I dreaded lest this note should escape you, and enclosed it in a tuberose to ascertain its descent. At the same hour to-morrow evening, in the same place, a tuberose will fall at your feet, if it be possible for me to repair to the garden; if not, I shall drop a cluster of violets from the grating. But is this a dream, such as sometimes float on the mists of my cell, or shall I indeed see you there, and forget while I see you that I am the persecuted, the disowned, the oppressed Ildefonsa Mauzoli?"

Over these lines, perused a thousand times, and folded next his heart, Annibal vainly tried to sleep. He rose, and lighting the taper he had extinguished to read it, sat down again to its perusal. While he held it in his hand, he felt as if he had a treasure which the lapse of ages could not exhaust; yet when again impelled by unsated curiosity, he again read it, he felt that its contents were brief and ineffectual.

The day passed in anticipations of delight, and when the moon rose he hasted to the convent. He reached, unobserved, the foot of the turret where he had stood the preceding night, and had not been there many moments when a tuberose fell at his feet; he scarce gave himself time for an exclamation of rapture, and hastened to the appointed spot. There is no telling, but to lovers, the tumult with which he watched for her steps amid the murmurs of the foliage, and the eagerness with which he sprung forward, when the tremulous glittering of moonlight falling on the light leaves of an acacia, made him believe he saw her white garments floating near him. At length she arrived. The first meeting of youthful lovers may well be imagined; the inarticulate murmurs that spake more than language—the looks still more eloquent than they—the sighs of vestal beauty, breathed through the fragrance of a moonlight bower, her cheek kindling in its ray, her eye wandering but not withdrawn, her steps hesitating yet lingering, timidity flushing into confidence, and sudden tenderness checked by timidity, her whole frame trembling in the alternate sway of fear and love. And, on the other hand, a young man, unlike any of his species she had ever before beheld, with all the animation of courage and all the attractions of beauty, who promised liberation and who whispered love—it was not in nature to resist it; the time, the place, breathed to them such thoughts as were perilous to hear; upon love confidence is soon engrafted, and Ildefonsa related her wild and simple story to Annibal before they separated.

"*My infant faculties must have* developed soon," said she, "for while almost unable to

walk, I recollect perfectly being every day caressed by a lady, whose form and mien were so different from those of the inmates of the cottage where I was nursed, that I invented, in infantine endearment, a new term to distinguish her, and the sensations with which her presence always inspired me. As I grew up, other circumstances caught my attention. The lady's visits were always in the evening, they were passed in tears and lamentations, and ended in a hurried departure. I also observed my dress and food to be different from those of the people with whom I lived, whose attention, though always assiduous and affectionate, was redoubled on every visit from the lady. When I was about five years old, I was also visited by a cavalier, who lavished on me the same tenderness and grief as the lady. At length I was suddenly removed, and for some time wandered through the apartments of a magnificent castle, where solemnity and sorrow reigned in every room, and where I saw the cavalier and the lady for a few moments together; they stood at opposite ends of the room surveying each other with looks of which I still remember that the anguish was mixed with distracting fondness. Their souls seemed rushing into their eyes; looks were all they durst indulge in; each looked as if to speak was to be undone; it was in vain I ran from one to another, endeavouring with childish blandishments to soothe the distress I did not understand, and could not bear to behold. Children are apt to be impressed by clamorous grief and violent exhibition, but on me this scene of silent agony made an impression never to be effaced. After this I returned to the cottage, and was visited and caressed as usual, till one night, one terrible night, never to be explained or forgotten, the cavalier came to the cottage with an air of distraction, and placing me before him on his horse, plunged into the forest at the close of evening. My thoughts were disengaged, and though disturbed I was not terrified. I employed myself in observing the furniture of the horse and his rider, which were sumptuous and warlike. We were now within sight of the turrets of a castle, which, tinged with the last light of day, rose over the dark forest tops, when several ruffians rushed on the cavalier from a thicket we were passing through. They were no common murderers; it was no common spirit of vengeance and horror that flashed from their visages and deepened their howl of wild delight. Afterwards I remembered nothing distinctly. Mine eyes were blinded by the glare of steel, mine ears were stunned by sounds which I echoed in convulsions of fear; around me were only the cries of slaughter and the strife of despair. I was thrown aside as one who was neither remembered to injure or to spare; the horrors of the struggle I do not recollect clearly, but he must have fallen before so many assailants. When my faculties returned, I found myself again in the cottage; I cast my eyes around timidly, and saw one of the bloody forms of the forest bending over the embers of a fire. I closed my eyes, and tried to be insensible again. I was delirious the remainder of the night, and only roused to recollection by sounds of such terror as insensibility resisted in vain; they were the voices of the murderers which muttered all night around my bed; I heard also the steps and voices of others, whom I feared to look at through the darkness, lest I should see realized the shapes which imagination poured on me when my eyes were closed.

"At intervals I saw lightnings of blasting force and brightness flashing through the casements of the hut, and heard sounds rolling over the roof which I afterwards heard were the thunders of a volcanic eruption. In the morning, when I at length ventured to inquire and to complain, I was checked by words and looks of prophetic sadness, and the woman to whom I was intrusted often began to speak to me, but suddenly broke off without power to proceed; whether distrusting the levity of childhood, or resisting the violation of confidence, I know not. A few days after I was conveyed to a convent, where I was placed to board, and from which I was removed, as afterwards from others, with much hurry of trepidation and many stratagems of concealment. Parent, relation, or inquiring friend, I had none; the life that had begun in calamity proceeded in mystery. At every place where I resided I was indeed told of a friend by whose directions my life was managed, but whom I was never to see; this friend I was exhorted to conciliate by silent reverence and remote submission. I felt little complacency towards an invisible benefactor by whom I was supported just above indigence, and hurried about from place to place without any communications of affection or confidence.

"At length I was some years ago placed in this convent, where I was told at my entrance I must prepare to take the vows, and seclude myself from the world for ever. Solitude and *we had left me little* power of choice, and little temptation to resistance. At first,

therefore, I heard this with little reluctance; but as I grew up strange visions floated before me of that world which I was to resign without having known. Sometimes I delighted to imagine the world a region whose gales breathed felicity and whose soil poured forth roses spontaneously, whose inhabitants melted in bowers of balm or sparkled in palaces of amethyst; and sometimes it appeared to me as in the dark dreams of that visioned night, every hand armed with the weapon of blood, and every visage flashing the flames of hell. Yet even over this picture of terrors was shed a light of romantic splendour and wild adventure, which, modified as it was by length of time and weakness of childish perceptions, left on my mind an impression of curiosity, mingled with awe, indeed, but not remote from desire. Whether my meditations on the world were just or not, the result was a determination not to quit it thus ignorant and incurious. I communicated my resolution to my abbess, who heard me with a burst of indignation, which, when I had suffered to pass over, I found her arguments not equally forcible. I resisted her, therefore, respectfully but tenaciously. When she was weary of contending with one she could neither convince nor punish, she wrote to this person whom she represented as the arbiter of my fate, and whose interference she looked on as irresistible. Her appeal was followed by a haughty command to take the veil without opposition, which would only prove the impotence of my contumacy and the imbecility of my helplessness. I was now roused to resistance—for whom will not oppression rouse? I demanded by whom I was detained and dictated to; I demanded to be restored to my natural protectors, and affirmed it was impossible there could be a human being so destitute of support and protection as I was represented to be. The answer was short, but decisive:—'Your birth is infamous—your parents are dead—you must take the veil or perish.'—Four years have since been wasted in oppression, without the right of command, and of resistance, without the hope of triumph. I have often resolved to fly; but where can I fly, to whom the world is a wilderness? I have sometimes meditated to submit, but how shall I submit, to whom a convent is worse than a tomb? The sight of you has given a new spring to hope; when I think of you, other thoughts mix themselves with the joys of liberation; the world, since you have said 'I love,' is no longer a dream of imaginary felicity; yet the same sounds would, I think, soothe and sustain me, were they never to be repeated beyond the echoes of a cloister."

When Ildefonsa had finished her short narrative, Annibal, whose thoughts while she spoke were busied in remote events, drew from it this conclusion, that she was the concealed and persecuted heir of honours which were usurped by murderers. The rest of the interview passed in a retrospect of the fearful events that had introduced them to each other. Ildefonsa, with many others, on the first alarm, had attempted to reach the town by a bridge, which gave way while hundreds were on it, and to the ruins of which she clung, without a hope of safety, till rescued by Annibal. They had become insensible when near the margin of the stream, to which they had been wafted by its fluctuations before they recovered. On parting, many plans of liberation were proposed, of which that which Annibal had already adopted appeared the most judicious: to employ the interest of a powerful ecclesiastic in removing Ildefonsa from monastic restraint, the oppression of which he encouraged her to bear, with tenderness that lamented what it advised. They were now separating, when they were startled by a noise; both trembled and looked round; a shadow, so faint that to Ildefonsa it was scarce visible, passed before them.—"What did you see?" said Annibal, in a voice of fear.—"I heard a faint sound," said Ildefonsa, answering vaguely.—"What did you see?" said Annibal, impatiently.—"I saw the shadow of a tree," she replied, terrified by his voice.—"I saw the form of a fiend," said Annibal, gloomily.—"What do you say?" said Ildefonsa, still more alarmed.—"That I am destroyed!" said Annibal; and he rushed from her with unconscious wildness.

Filippo was detained four days at Puzzoli by the indisposition of the prior, to whom he at length presented his letters. The prior, a man of strong passions and extensive power, proud of patronage, and ostentatious of authority, immediately espoused Annibal's cause, wrote to all he could command or importune, sent to Annibal a magnificent present, and invited him to reside with him at Puzzoli. This intelligence was sufficiently inspiriting, and the progress he had continued to make in Ildefonsa's affections was such as might animate a less sanguine imagination. Yet when Filippo returned, he found his master plunged in a gloom which nothing could explain or dispel; in vain Filippo watched him with the mute assiduity of humble

affection ; in vain he exhausted all the flatteries of his eloquence in painting his approaching happiness and distinction, the resistless austerity and munificent affection of the prior, the disappointment of the abbess and her secret employer, and the triumphant liberation of the Signora Ildefonsa, with part of whose story he had been intrusted. Annibal remained silent, or only replied by interjections, which proved his mind was far from the subject on which he spoke. He still resorted in the evening to the convent, but for the evening he also appeared to have some other employment. His despondency increased every moment, and Filippo, who at first pretended to be his counsellor, had now little business but to watch his looks silently in the day, and count his groans sleeplessly all night. Ildefonsa perceived the change also, but in the precarious and distressful state of their passion there were so many reasons for melancholy, that, judging of his feelings by her own, she ascribed them to the same cause, and endeavoured to inspirit him with hopes she scarcely dared to indulge herself.

It was in one of these melancholy hours, which were half devoted to fear, and half to love, that Filippo, who watched at the extremity of the wall, rushed forward with terror in his countenance, and motioned to the lovers to separate. Ildefonsa retired through the garden in haste, and Annibal retreated with Filippo, who hurried along his master with looks and broken interjections of fear, till they had reached a considerable distance from the convent.

"Signor," said Filippo, "I have seen him." Annibal made no answer. "Signor," said Filippo, stopping, and turning the light of his lantern full on Annibal, "I have seen him." Annibal moved onwards silently. They reached the inn. Filippo, emboldened by mutual terror, entered the room along with him. "Signor," said he, gazing in his master's face, and not speaking till he was near enough to whisper, "signor, I have seen him to-night."—"I see him every night," said Annibal, gloomily. Filippo retreated. "Yes, Filippo, every night. He is not dead, poison cannot kill him; he crosses my path when I move, he lurks in my chamber when I sit, he pervades all the elements, and whispers audibly in my ears even when their senses are closed."—"Signor, what is it you say?"—"I know not what I say; once I hoped my heart would have burst before I could have uttered thus much, but it is in vain—human resistance is in vain. I know him not, through mist and vision my mind grasps at him in vain; but I feel that though his character is shadowy, his influence is substantial; I feel that I am——— did I say his victim? Oh, not yet, not yet."

He fell on his knees, and prayed in agony. Filippo sunk beside him. "Oh, signor, you break my heart! if the terrible being I have seen be yet alive, the guilt is not yours, nor is it mine. I had hoped, indeed, he had perished; nor would I have felt so much fear from his spectre as I did from his living presence this night. Oh, signor, he is not a being our hands could reach! we are sinful men, signor; let us confess to some holy man, and beg the aids of the church. We are sinful men, and our offences visit us in these shapes of terror—I never recollected them so distinctly as I do this night."—"Filippo," said his unhappy master, "I have yielded to the weakness of nature once, and the first time—no one has seen me thus subdued before; dismiss your fears—you are in no danger; this business requires other agents; leave me to encounter it alone. I believe I am for the dark hour, and the unutterable task—I believe I am resigned by my better angel; a blast has spread over life, and the organs with which I behold objects are seared and discoloured. Go from me; I no longer wish to feel anything human near me; it enfeebles me, and my nerves should be of iron now. I should be mantled in midnight, and armed with serpents; I would I were; I would I were muffled in blindness, or hissed into stupor. Filippo, do not heed me; I struggle no longer from conviction, but from despair. Filippo, do not heed me. The enemy of souls, it is said, has great power over melancholy spirits; I have been melancholy from my youth; but this is reality—terrible, overwhelming reality; here is fact and consequence. Filippo, why do you gaze thus? do not heed me."

Filippo, ignorant of the real cause of the convulsions of Annibal's mind, and ascribing them to the dread that the being he had seen was the spectre of the poisoned monk, endeavoured to console him by the hope that he had escaped the effects of the poison, and was yet alive and uninjured. "I know—I know he is alive!" said Annibal, distractedly. "There is, then, nothing to fear, or to be reproached with, signor: I will get absolution for giving him the drink, and we will go to the holy prior happily."—"And who shall give me absolution?" said *Annibal.* "*For what,* signor?" asked Filippo, confounded by the question. "Villain," said

Annibal, starting into frenzy, "do not name it—do not utter it even mentally!—would you tempt me to speak it?—would you feast your ears with my ruin? You are one of his emissaries, bribed to haunt me in his absence, and shut up every breathing hole of remission—every glimpse of quiet."

Filippo, astonished and dismayed, forbore to speak, and Annibal, soon after perceiving him about to quit the room, desired him to sleep at the foot of his bed that night. Filippo obeyed, and Annibal, throwing himself on the bed, closed his eyes. Filippo rose, and bending over him, watched if he slept. His master, starting with the quickness of habitual fear, demanded why he had risen? "Be not displeased, signor, these are relics of power and sanctity—every one of these crosses has touched the shrine of Loretto; I was going, while you slept, to lay them under your pillow, so that no evil thing might hurt you." Annibal silently suffered him, and again tried to rest; but Filippo again rose, and began to tie something about the pillars of the bed. "And these, signor, I have but thought of this moment; they have power against all wizards and unholy things that walk the earth in the shape of men, but are not; this is a shred of the cloth in which the head of St Januarius was wrapped when it was first discovered: while this is on your bed, you are safe from spell and wizardry."—"It is indeed a relic of virtue if I am," said Annibal, heavily; "but where did you procure them, Filippo?"—"My uncle Michelo gave them to me on his dying bed; he had purchased them from a Dominican."—"Take them away quick; the haunting of that name will not depart from me all night; let not Michelo touch me—it brings back a thousand images; dark and disastrous thoughts are with me when he is named. Lie down again, Filippo, and speak not till the morning." Filippo obeyed, but twice started up in the night from an apprehension there were others in the room, so loud were Annibal's exclamations and struggles in his sleep.

To these nights the occupations of the day sometimes afforded relief; the presence of Ildefonsa soothed both his melancholy and his passion; the variety, too, and spirit of adventure, which the circumstances of their interview were diversified by, occupied his mind and his imagination. Sometimes the signal of their meeting was the low tones of Ildefonsa's mandoline, breathing from among the moon-lit foliage—sometimes that of disappointment was a cluster of withered flowers, dropped from the grating of her cell; once he heard her utter sounds, of a tone different from those of common tenderness, and paused before he approached her to interrupt it. The lines were these:—

"We meet no more—oh, think on me!
Though lost to sense for ever;
Yet faithful Memory's record dear
Whispers—we shall not sever.

No, by that lip of richest sweets,
Oh, never press'd by me!
No, by that soft eye's humid fires,
I must remember thee!

Each passing object's casual light
Shall oft revive its power;
Even you, pale beams, shall wake the thought
They lit our parting hour.

And then I'll think I see that form,
In ardent beauty glowing;
And at the thought a tear shall wake,
As fond as now 'tis flowing."

Annibal advanced from his concealment; Ildefonsa discovered him, and said, in faltering accents, "Those lines were suggested to me when I had seen you once, and expected to see you no more."—"And was it possible," said Annibal, "you could think such a passion could exhaust itself in one night's rapture and conflict?"—"Were it not better that it should, than to have lingered through a few nights more, only to expire?"—"What do you say, Ildefonsa?"—"That where there is no confidence there can be no passion. Annibal, Annibal, are these like the sweet hours of early love?—is this the mixture of soul and feeling you have talked of? Your eye is wild, Annibal, and your cheek is pale—you will not tell me the cause, yet you say you love me."—"If you love me," said Annibal, vehemently, "mention this no more. Can the communication of misery and guilt endear affection or increase happiness?"—"Of guilt, Annibal?"—"Yes; is there not mental guilt?—may not a man be a murderer, a parricide in thought?—do you think that the hardened wretch, whose hands reek every night with blood, unrepented and unremembered, suffers like him over whose soul the image of anticipated guilt sits for ever, the absence of commission more than balanced by the horrors of feeling and remorse? Oh, Ildefonsa, the anguish of a mind unwillingly depraved, to which evil is aggravated by the bitterness of compulsion and the revoltings of innate integrity, such a state was only to be imagined in the list of human sufferings till it was inflicted on me."—"What do you mean—blessed mother, what do you mean by those

words?"—"Nothing—I know not myself; let us talk of your liberation. How did we wander to this subject?"—"It was my fault, and I should have forbore it, for I perceive it always leads you in waywardness and musing—it was my fault; but my mind was strangely touched to-night. I again saw that ominous stranger, whom, when I see, I believe, in my fear, everything I have heard of one that watches over my life for evil."—"Who—what stranger is this?—why did you not tell me of him before?—what manner of man is he?"—"You startle me, Annibal, by your vehemence; he is a monk; I have observed him some days past, in consultation with the abbess. I know not of what convent he is, or what brings him to ours, but I feel a wild awe as he passes and looks on me."—"His name—have you heard his name?"—"I think I have heard the abbess call him Father Schemoli; but I will watch him more closely, and learn——"—"No, no, no, approach him not—touch him not; it is unlawful to hold converse with him. Ildefonsa, my innocent love, beware of intercourse with that being; it is not good to hold it; once I joined my hand to his, and his grasp has never been relaxed since."

Ildefonsa, now terrified to tears, terrified Annibal by her distress. He attempted to soothe her, but every effort to diversify their melancholy conference was rendered ineffectual by involuntary recurrence or gloomy abstraction.—"There is a spell over me too," said Annibal, with a painful smile, "my mind has also been strangely touched. I ascribe it," said he, forcing himself to proceed, "to a prediction I recollect relating to myself, which sheds a gloom over me I cannot dispel."—"What is the purport of it?" said Ildefonsa. "That I am to be flattered with a prospect of the completion of my wishes, never to be verified; that the object I love is to be torn from me at the moment of possession; and that life is to change its complexion at the period when its aspect becomes brilliant with joy and hope."—"The prediction is so general, it must have been uttered in infancy," said Ildefonsa. "Possibly long before it," said Annibal, heavily. "Has it been so long in circulation?" replied Ildefonsa, endeavouring to evade the application. "I only heard it last night," said Annibal, with emphasis. "It is a melancholy one," said Ildefonsa, yielding to the complexion of the hour, and the conference. "There is an alternative," said Annibal. "I would embrace any alternative preferably," said Ildefonsa, heedlessly. "Would you—would you indeed?" said Annibal with sudden eagerness. "I would assuredly," she replied, "unless——"—"Unless what?"—"Unless it involved a crime—or——"—"Ay, ay, I know all you would say," said Annibal. "Would the degree of the crime make any difference?" said he, after a pause; then again interrupting her with, "But that is of no consequence to me." From a conference thus wildly broken, neither could derive much pleasure; they separated, uncheered by a promise of speedy return, for Ildefonsa informed her lover that attendance on a peculiar ceremony would detain her for three following nights.

This interval Filippo observed his master to pass in unmitigated wretchedness, and overheard him, in solitude and in sleep, perpetually repeating to himself the ominous sentence which he had communicated to Ildefonsa. On the morning of the fourth day, letters arrived from Puzzoli of the most momentous import. They contained an order from the bishop of the diocese for the removal of Sister Ildefonsa Manzoli, of the Ursuline convent, to another in Puzzoli. This the prior informed Annibal, in another letter, was only a preparatory step to her being declared free to adopt or reject a monastic life. The letter concluded by pressing Annibal's removal to Puzzoli, where the event of his love and fortune seemed to demand his presence. The order was brought to the convent by a messenger of the prior's, who was also an ecclesiastical officer, and presented by him to the abbess; Filippo accompanied him by the order of Annibal. The delivery of the order was attended with some formality, and witnessed by a number of attendants.

Hour after hour Annibal counted the delay of the messenger with impatience, which was at length discoloured by fear. Unable to communicate the cause of his agitation, and agitated by other causes, he wandered on the margin of the river, now dark and wild with winter, and tried in vain to expel from his thought the dolorous sounds which his lips were incessantly forming, while he struggled to forget them. Late in the evening Filippo returned breathless, with strange intelligence, which at first he could only vent in exclamation; compassion for his master's solicitude at length made him coherent, and he related the events of the day; but his peculiar manner and numerous interruptions may be spared in narration.

He had pressed, with many other attendants, into the apartment where the messenger of

the prior was introduced to the abbess. She received the paper with submission, but on receiving it, crossed herself with marks of grief and dismay, and then addressing herself to the messenger, said, "This order comes too late, except to renew our grief for the loss of a departed sister; Ildefonsa Manzoli is now beyond the reach of earthly power; she expired yesterday."

The messenger, with strong expressions of concern, and some of distrust, quitted the apartment where the clamorous distress of the nuns, which seemed to wait a signal for its renewal, contended in vain with the loud murmurs in which the attendants testified their suspicion and resentment. But Filippo, whose first impulse of concern was superseded by his penetration, determined not to quit the convent thus incuriously. He dreaded his master's despair; he mistrusted the malignity of the abbess; and while the attendants were dispersing, he glided through the passages of the convent, and repaired to the chapel, where he dispensed his prostrations with such unction, and examined the relics with so profound a visage, that he attracted the notice of an old, deaf, crippled nun, who usually loitered in the chapel, to tax the faith or charity of devout visitors. By this sibyl he was led about from one saint's nail to another's eyebrow; he was shown the dust that dropped from the crayons of St Luke, and a tile which fell from the Holy House of Loretto, in its aerial journey from Palestine to Italy. In the course of his inquiries he satisfied himself that she was almost completely deaf, and nearly blind; he now, therefore, reconnoitred the chapel with some degree of confidence. Through one of the upper arcades, he observed the nuns passing with such frequency, that he immediately conjectured it opened to the gallery where their cells were ranged. To confirm his conjectures, by the gratuity of a few zechins, he prevailed on the nun to repeat a certain number of prayers for him, at a shrine which owed the distinction more to the distance from the place of his devotion, than to his belief of its uncommon sanctity. When he had made this arrangement (in the prosecution of which he very soon had the satisfaction of seeing the aged nun fast asleep), he cautiously approached the part of the chapel under the arcade; he knew not in what manner to convey his presence or his purposes. A small portable stringed instrument, which he had purchased on the way from one of the attendants, in hopes of soothing his master's gloomy solitude, presented itself as a lucky medium of unsuspected communication. He touched it, but the old nun, awoke by so unusual a sound, tottered forward to demand the reason of it, at the same time assuring Filippo that he had been so unfortunate as to disturb a vision in which St Ursula was just about to promise her any favour she could ask for the young visitor, on condition he applied for the situation of gardener to the convent: "For our gardener," said the nun, "has grown so old——"—"Venerable mother," said Filippo, "return to the shrine, doubtless you will be favoured with a continuance of the vision. I myself received an uncommon accession just at the moment, which, with the help of your prayers, may improve into an actual call to become gardener to St Ursula. With regard to this instrument, venerable mother, I was once, when wandering over the Andes (which are a ridge of high mountains dividing Germany from the island of Africa), chased by a band of bloody, unbelieving Moors; I had no instrument but this, on which I was inspired to play a hymn to St Ursula, the effect of which was so sacred, that the whole troop was converted, and remain good Catholics to this day. I made a vow on the spot, that on this very instrument I would play the same hymn at the shrine of St Ursula as soon as I arrived in Italy; I beg, therefore, reverend mother, you will do me no disquiet in the performance of my vow."—"Heaven forbid!" replied the religious; "I never heard a more glorious recital; it is exactly like the legends which the confessor reads to us on the vigils of the saints."

She then returned to the shrine, where she was soon wrapt into another vision on the call of the young gardener. But however the deaf nun might be dismissed without much cost of dexterity, he knew not how to lull the vigilant sisters. It was a lucky hour, that allotted to private devotion, which most of them were resigning to sleep. He recollected an air he had heard Annibal sing, in suppressed tones, near the garden, while he waited for Ildefonsa; it was plaintive, and might well pass for a pilgrim's song. He touched a slight prelude on his instrument, and then sung the following words, *mezza voce*:—

"If she who weeps a lover's woes,
Yet linger near these conscious walls,
Of absent love the song she knows,
She hears its fond, though timid calls."

He paused—all was still; he repeated it in a voice tremulous with disappointment, and a

light vibration (low and brief as a sigh) of Ildefonsa's well-known mandoline, came to his ear, filling him with confidence and joy. His recognition of this signal was without doubt or fear, for he had heard his master say, that Ildefonsa was the only inmate within the walls who touched the mandoline. He rose joyfully, and was quitting the chapel, without disturbing the old nun, to learn the success of her second conference with St Ursula, when a sound near him arrested his steps. He knew not to what direction to refer it; it seemed that of a human voice, yet it issued from under his feet. He listened. "There was no sound," said a voice from beneath the shrine; "it was fancy—the chapel is empty."—"Then let us ascend," said a female voice, "for I am suffocated with these damps. Is your apprehension of discovery sufficiently removed?"—"Perfectly," answered the first, which Filippo discovered to be that of Father Schemoli.—"Discovery cannot penetrate where you have led me. To-morrow night then, reverend mother, this serpent shall be crushed in the dark! may I rely on your assistant?"—"As firmly as on your own resolution, father."—"That has never failed," said Schemoli, emphatically.

The time which they took to ascend, and enter the chapel, by a concealed grating, in the pavement of the shrine, gave Filippo an opportunity to screen himself behind the profuse volumes of drapery that enfolded it; but when he saw the confessor and abbess of the convent, for that was the female, ascend from the shrine, and pass the spot where he stood, he ceased to hope for life. They passed him, however, and drawing near the door, observed the nun; the abbess awoke her: "Why are you sleeping?" said the abbess. "I was not sleeping," replied the nun. "Strangers might have entered the chapel," said the confessor. "That is impossible while I am here," observed the nun. "Are you sure no one has been here since?" asked the abbess. "There was one young pilgrim," said the nun, exalting her voice, "who went through the panelled door behind the drapery, at the left pediment of the shrine of St Ursula." Filippo took the hint as dexterously as it was given, and gliding through the door, which he had not till then observed, retreated silently through a remote passage. "You were very particular in observing the manner of his exit," said Schemoli. "To tell you the truth, I let him out myself," answered the nun.—"She is foolish," said the abbess, retiring with Schemoli, "but strict and faithful."

In the meantime Filippo hastened to his master: he informed him of the supposed machinations of the abbess; he did not conceal from him the presence and agency of Schemoli: he averred it his belief that the signora Ildefonsa did exist, though he feared it was determined she should not exist much longer. All personal interference was now fruitless, as he would probably be excluded from the walls of the convent; but, as the following night was assigned for the celebration of her funeral, at which strangers would, of course, be present, he advised Annibal to repair thither, with the officer who had brought the bishop's order, to state the circumstances which had occurred, and of which he (Filippo) would avow himself a witness, cover the abbess with confusion, and interest the spectators and the ecclesiastics in the restitution of Ildefonsa. Every thing, indeed, that courage or ingenuity could propose, was anticipated in the advice of Filippo, which Annibal prepared to adopt, with a heart he was delighted to feel beating with human passions once more.

The funeral of a sister of the Ursuline convent was always attended with peculiar solemnity, from the abbess's wish to impress strangers, who were permitted to attend it, with an opinion of the sanctity of her retreat, as well as to spread over the minds of the inmates a deeper shade of religious awe and submission. The office was to be performed in the chapel at midnight, two hours before which every avenue was filled by strangers, among whom Annibal and his attendants found no difficulty in mingling. His spirits were solemnly touched: the idea of Ildefonsa associated with the persuasion and imagery of death (though from death he believed her sufficiently distant), the gliding steps, the dim light, and the low requiem, repelled the tumult of expectation, and stilled and saddened him. While the crowd were examining the devices with which the passages of the chapel were arrayed, Annibal, from an upper arcade, beheld a group of nuns assembled round the bier, which stood in the centre of the chapel. The tapers were not yet lit, but a torch burned dimly at the foot of the bier, showing the pale, exanid forms of the sisters, who from time to time breathed the low, halting tones, which compose the office for the dead, and which were soon to mingle with the chantings of the choir, and the rich thunders of the organ. Annibal, visionary by nature, and

melancholy from habit, listened, entranced in sadness, and almost wished himself lapped in the deep rest which was soothed by the breathings of such holy harmony. Of Ildefonsa, even if he possessed her, he dreaded his possession would not be long, and though armed for her liberation, he already wept her as dead.

Meanwhile midnight approached; an ecclesiastic of rank attended to perform the service. The abbess and the nuns were ranged in their galleried stalls, the crowd below, pale with religious awe, filled the aisle and chancel. The service of the dead was chanted—the roar of the organ ceased; the prior, rising, advanced to the bier, and spreading his arms, breathed a benediction over the pall that covered it. The attendants, raising it, bore it towards the narrow door of a subterranean cemetery, preceded by the sacristan, whose torch flared over the dark and arched entrance. On a signal, the nuns were about to renew the requiem, whose last echo was now dying on the ear, when Annibal, who had wrought himself to an energetic burst of rage and enthusiasm, called aloud to them to forbear, and appealing alternately to the prior and the spectators, demanded justice on the abbess, for deceiving them by a fictitious interment of a nun, whom, if alive, she had immured in the recesses of a dungeon. This bold outcry was followed by terror and confusion; the attendants paused in dismay, the nuns ran shrieking to their cells, the prior advanced in amaze, and the crowd, variously divided, awaited the event of this extraordinary appeal.

Annibal now briefly, but vividly, related the late events, which were corroborated by Filippo; he urged the prior by his awe of episcopal authority, and he interested the spectators by a detail of the helplessness, the persecutions, and the beauty of Ildefonsa. By this time the abbess had descended, and appealed loudly in her turn against the insult offered to her character and her sanctuary by a wandering fugitive, of whom nothing more was known, than that he was an enemy to the Catholic faith, a seducer of vestal purity, and a calumniator of vestal sanctity. Annibal, who perceived the auditory fluctuating, hastened to bring the contest to a speedy and obvious test, and throwing himself at the feet of the prior, besought him to command the pall to be removed, and the bier to be examined. "If," added he. "Ildefonsa be living, she is not on that bier; if she be dead, the appearance of the corse will justify my charge, and blast her murderers with conviction."

To this proposal, the prior, moved by strong personal curiosity, consented, nor did the abbess seem to decline it; they moved with difficulty through the chancel, now obstructed by the crowd, tumultuous with curiosity. The attendants invested the bier, the prior himself held a taper as he bowed over it—the pall was removed; with a spring of agony, Annibal threw himself on the object it disclosed—on the corse of Ildefonsa!

He started up, revived by frantic hope; he examined the hand on which his burning tears were dropping—it was no waxen effigy; it was cold and relaxed, but it was human flesh. He looked with straining eyes on the face; there was no sign of violence: he knew them well—there was neither streak nor stain, neither discolouration nor contraction; she was calm and lovely, as in sleep. He was stirred from his trance by a sound which he heard, without comprehending it—it was the loud rage of the abbess and the spectators, who, on this visible proof of the falsity of his charge, would willingly have torn Annibal to pieces, without patience for his explanations, or a sympathy for his misery; but his mind, embittered by persecution, and goaded by a conviction of crime or imposture in the present event, furnished him with such sudden eloquence of vindication, such a flow of passion (which described himself as bereft, by monkish fraud and cruelty, of the only hope that soothed his existence, and heaped together such fearful stories of monastic oppression and religious murder), that the lower orders of the auditory, always favourable to the depression of dignity, again adopted his cause, and demanded loudly an inquisition into the affair. The abbess, enraged, addressed the crowd, and warned them how they upheld a wizard, a sorcerer, one that was leagued with unholy spirits, against the cause of the church and its votaries; she told them the stranger was a Montorio, one of the dark race, whose deeds of horror extended beyond the limits of earth, and the catalogue of human crimes.

From this accusation, Annibal, unused to the persecutions of Ippolito, was defending himself with the vehemence of genuine horror, and looking round the multitude, demanded who dare approve the charges on himself or his house, when his eye, as it swept the circle with a look of command, rested on the dark face of Schemoli, standing directly opposite him,

and regarding him with a look of fixed sternness. Annibal was transfixed to the spot; his eye became hollow, and his lip quivered. He bent forward with a broken sound of fear, and retreated without a power of collecting thought, or uttering a word. The abbess screamed with triumph. "See," said she, "the wretch, arrested in the very moment of his false defence by the power of conscience! See, does he utter a word? Look on his haggard face—his eye is bent on air; but doubtless he sees forms from which the eyes of the faithful are veiled."

Annibal springing through the crowd with a vehement impulse, called him by name to stay; then retreating, with his eyes still fixed in the direction where he had glided away, said inwardly, "See where he flits along; he is no creature of this earth!"—"Whom do you speak to?" said some around him, in fear, or in curiosity. "Ask me not," said Annibal, wildly; "I dare not tell: his form is human, but be not deceived—he is not one of us." The few who pressed around him were driven back by these wild words, and the zealous and terrified crowd now as loudly pressing for his arrest and detention, as they had a moment past to hear and to favour him. The prior advanced, and informed him his conduct and expressions had been so extraordinary, that he conceived it his duty as a churchman to take cognizance of them. He then commanded his attendants to secure and guard him. On the unhappy prisoner, neither his address, nor the consequent movements, appeared to make any impression; he was in the calmness of fixed madness. From time to time he uttered the words, "See where he glides away," to the great terror of his guard, whom he, however, made no attempt to resist.

Terror, disastrous passion, and disappointed revenge, had indeed impaired his reason, but his madness was without violence, for his strength was exhausted. The remaining rites of sepulture were hastily concluded; the crowd, still murmuring with wonder and doubt, dispersed; and the prior, recollecting that in the ruined town there was now no place to secure the prisoner, consulted with the abbess, who agreed that he should remain secure in some outer apartment of the convent, and watched by the attendants. There was little need of security; Annibal remained calm and passive; but from time to time uttered words which, had his hearers been acquainted with the late events of his life, would have suggested ideas more terrible than the outrage of a convent; but terrified by the ramblings of delirium, which some interpreted as possession, and some as prophecy, his guards, one by one, retired, each alleging the departure of the last as a reason for his own, and each dreading, as he saw a companion retire, that he would be left alone with the maniac. It was solitude, silence, and chillness that recalled Annibal to his reason. He was in a deserted room that had once been the sacristy; the pale, faint light of the moon almost setting, fell, through mist and haze, on a narrow window. Annibal for a moment recollected the events of the night, and then, in the confusion of returning sense, endeavoured to exclude them by shutting his eyes; for the late privation of reason had been accompanied with imperfect vision, and he wished to retire for shelter to insensibility again. It was impossible; everything occurred with a force more vivid than reality, and again he started up to prevent the attendants from carrying the bier of Ildefonsa to the vault. He found himself in a lone and narrow apartment, the door of which was secured; but from without he thought he heard whispers as of men in consultation. He now implored release or information respecting the fate of Ildefonsa, by every topic that he thought could operate on compassion or fear, and in every tone of passion, from the whisperings of supplication to the hoarse, broken, inarticulate roar of rage and menace.

He procured neither freedom nor answer; and at length feeling his brain again unsettle, and dreading the loss of reason as the extinction of his sole means of hope, he retreated to a seat, and hiding his head in the folds of his mantle, and pressing his temples firmly with his hands, he tried to exclude the forms that were every moment enlarging in size, and quickening in motion before him, and to breathe a broken prayer for the preservation of his reason. He grew calmer; but when he ventured to look up, he again mistrusted the faithfulness of his senses. Every object around him seemed in motion; and the blue and shadowy light quivered so fitfully and wild, that a kind of fantastic animation seemed to pervade the very walls and ceiling. Again he closed his eyes, but the motion was palpable; for though he could no longer see any object, he felt the seat shaking under him. Before he could rise, he heard the bells of the convent pealing out with that confused and dolorous sound that the wretched inmates of

countries visited by earthquakes understand but too well. The thought of perishing without a struggle was horrible. Again he rushed to the door, and implored to be at least allowed a chance for life, which in that hour of horrors is not even denied to the most abandoned convict in his dungeon. He implored in vain; his cries, even to his own ears, were drowned in the increasing tumult and distraction in the convent. He heard, indeed, many voices, but none that answered him; he heard steps passing close to his door, and some even that faltered as they passed; but they faltered from the terror of their own flight; and though they echoed his cries with involuntary impulse, they yet seemed not to hear them. At length a crash was heard, which seemed like the toppling of the whole structure; and the next moment a mass of ruinous building falling against the door of Annibal's prison, it was shattered to atoms; and through the chasm he beheld the walls of the convent shaking, figures, in the infatuation of fear, clinging to the rent and heaving fragments, and a copper-tinged and flaky sky peering through the crushed roof, whose crags and ridges, tinted with the glare, seamed the mass with portentous shapes, that seemed to the fugitives below like dragons perched on their spires, or hippogriffs breathing sulphur through their shrines. Annibal started from his prison, and the next moment saw its walls rolling together like a scroll, and its place lost in a cloud of dust, and sparks, and sulphurous smoke. Half blind, half stifled, he struggled on, and perceived that the fall of the principal tower, which had shaken the walls of his prison to dust, had also forced its way through the pavement of the cloistered passage on which it descended, and which now only presented a number of chasms, whose darkness or depth the eye could not measure, and whose crumbling edges were but just visible in the light of the funeral lamps which had burned in the cloister that night; some of them, yet unextinguished in the fall, gleamed to some depth in the chasms, showing their rude, dark prominences, and playing ineffectually on the thick darkness in which their depths were lost. He noted all this with perceptions quickened by fear; but the impulse to advance was irresistible to one so lately in durance. He advanced therefore, he was on the edge of a cavity; on the opposite side was a door, through which a steady light appeared, as if that part of the building was not yet in ruins. He attempted to spring across it, but either his senses were false, or his strength impaired, for he plunged into darkness and emptiness, and his breath and recollection failed in a moment. He recovered; but after what interval he had no means of knowing; he felt himself sore and stunned, but not incapable of motion. He rose, and attempted to discover into what place he had descended. The floor was damp and stony; it was evidently the floor of a vault, but the utmost extent of his arms could not discover the walls, nor encounter any intervening object. He groped on in cautious and breathless fear, till the dread that he was only treading the same dark circle—the dread that he was plunged into an abyss, over which was heaped a mountain of ruin no hand could ever remove—the dread that he must wander in darkness, uttering cries that must never be heard, and imploring aid that never could reach him, till he must suck the dark and flinty ground in the madness of thirst, or gnaw his withering flesh for food—the dread of this rose like a burning tide of agony in his throat; and sending forth a cry that might make itself be heard, even amid the uproar of that night, he sunk on the ground. He sprung up again, for his cry was plainly repeated by other sounds than the echoes of the vault; again it was repeated, and Annibal, to whom even the imaginary tenant of darkness would scarce have been an unwelcome visitant, called aloud and repeatedly, and springing on one foot, listened with every faculty on the stretch. Again he heard a voice so distinct, so well known, so unhoped for, that, bewildered and laughing with convulsive joy, he said to himself—"It is impossible—it is illusion—it is a sleight of the enemy. Oh, when will the cool, clear light of the morn come, and all this vanish?" He was answered in tones he could no longer misunderstand. "It is—it is I; stir not, move not a step; I must approach in darkness; but stir not limb, or joint, or thought, till you feel my hand in yours. Again, believing his senses failing, he closed his eyes. It was fortunate he did so. The next moment he felt the soft hand of Ildefonsa lightly touching his. With a sensation inexpressibly delicious, he suffered himself to be led a few steps by her in darkness. He dared not yet trust himself with sight; he felt as if there was a treasure near him, which to discover too soon was to destroy; he dreaded that to open his eyes would be to banish the delicious dream of her voice. At length a strong light fell on them; he looked around; Ildefonsa was beside him, and a torch burned at the foot of a cluster of pillars, against which she leant, apparently exhausted with emotion.

For a long time their questions were asked and answered by looks, by lips that moved, but could not articulate, by eyes from which they smote away the tears that obscured the sight of each other for a moment. "Oh, Annibal," said Ildefonsa, speaking first, though feebly, "my preserver, I have preserved you in turn. When I discovered you, you were suspended on one foot over a vault, of which the depth is——Oh, Santa Madre! it opens beneath my feet when I think of it; another step, and you had been dashed into atoms, into ten thousand atoms! Had I called, you would have moved; had I approached, you would have moved; had I displayed the torch, in the giddiness of sudden sight, you would have moved, and a motion was death. I concealed the light—I called to you not to move—I crept over to you, dreading the sound of my own foot; I saved you—and now save me, for I can stand no longer."

She tottered, and the wound (which Ippolito had bathed in the stream and bound up) bled afresh from the violence of her emotions. Annibal, grasping her in his arms, looked round with anguish and distraction. In a vault of vast extent, dimly lit by the lamps of a distant shrine, and strewed with the relics and emblems of the dead, he looked around in vain for relief or for hope. Ildefonsa's eyes wandered and her lips were pale; but she was yet capable of conveying her meaning by gestures, and now pointing vehemently to the left, Annibal bore her thither, still carrying the torch, and still looking around without a glimpse of deliverance.

The direction to which she pointed appeared only more dark and rugged than that they quitted; but as he advanced (the torch burning dimly from the damps of the vault), a faint blue light seemed to hover in the distance. He stopped and gazed; Ildefonsa murmured an audible sound of encouragement. The light became more distinct, it issued through an aperture in the roof of the vault, which here was so low, that Annibal was compelled to bend as he approached it. A fragment of something resembling a piece of drapery floated through it, and a voice, which at first breathed a few faint timid calls from above, now bursting out in a torrent of lauds, blessings, encouragements, and entreaties, accompanied by a figure eagerly bending from the cavity, discovered Filippo. It was no time for inquiries, though the situation suggested a thousand. Filippo, with equal strength and dexterity, fastening his mantle, which he tore into stripes, to the edge of the cavity, drew up Ildefonsa, with Annibal's assistance, who was himself aided by its projections to ascend after her, and beheld, with mind and senses revived, the morning sun dawning on the placid course of the river, which had the preceding evening reflected the turrets and groves of the convent, but whose waters now glided by dismantled walls, and were fringed with inverted trees, patches of verdure dotting naked rocks, and beds of sand and slime poured into the bosom of gardens. In the sudden joy of liberation, they almost forgot the circumstances of danger and distress by which they were still surrounded, till recalled by the necessity of immediate shelter for Ildefonsa. A perplexed consultation was held. It was dangerous to remain near the convent, though in ruins; it was dangerous to return to the town. Of any local resource nearer than Puzzoli, Annibal and his servant were ignorant, and there it was impossible, in Ildefonsa's exhausted state, to proceed. They were relieved by Ildefonsa herself, who recollected a retreat where neither pursuit nor accident was likely to betray them. Thither she was borne by Annibal, who felt, while watching her dim eye, and listening to her painful and broken respiration, an agony of domestic intimate distress, such as had never accompanied the high and strange events in which he had been lately conversant.

It was a hut rudely built of sods, cemented by the intertwisted roots and foliage of the verdure with which they were covered, and roofed with wicker, over which the trees that surrounded it had shed a profuse covering of leaves. They were not surprised to see it yet standing, for they knew that slight structures often survive those shocks which overturn palaces. "This," said Ildefonsa, as they supported her into it, and strewed their vests over the bed of moss on which they placed her, "this was the habitation of a recluse. His habits were solitary and gloomy; the peasants believed him a being conscious of some great crime, or engaged in some dark pursuit. They dreaded to approach his hut while living; he has been dead some days, and their reluctance to visit it is probably greater. Here we are safe, for superstition secures us from every intruder."

Annibal groaned incredulously. The care of every further arrangement was left to Filippo,

who planned with his usual address, and executed with his usual caution and spirit. He resolved, as soon as the confusion of the disaster had somewhat abated, to return to the town, and there, with the clamorous grief of a domestic, to bewail his master, whom he was to represent as having perished in the ruins of the convent; at the same time he was to learn the reports circulated concerning the causes of his and the Signora Ildefonsa's disappearance. He was to remove from the house where they had lived every article that might either lead to a discovery of his master's name, or minister to their comfort in their woodland abode; and whatever was yet necessary during their sojourn there, he was to procure from another village, which he purposed to visit in disguise. Annibal, satisfied of his talents and fidelity, suffered him to arrange his plans without interruption, while he hung over his pallid love, and saw, with more anguish, her forced and patient smiles, than the expression of pain and weakness with which they contended ineffectually.

Filippo, in about an hour, set out, and Annibal was left alone with Ildefonsa. During this interval, he experienced new and peculiar feelings; he felt he had opened a new page in the history of human misery. His rank had been exalted, and his youth was passed in the downy repose of luxury; his wishes were anticipated by the diligence of a hundred domestics, and of wants he had formed conceptions as clear as the inhabitants of the torrid zone may have of the cold, and darkness, and wintry horrors of Greenland. His distresses were wholly intellectual and imaginary; he had yet to learn that there were such evils as cold, and want, and destitution, and on this day he learnt it with bitter force.

To spread over Ildefonsa's couch every garment he could spare, to close every cranny of the hut with the dryest leaves and moss he could find, to vary her scanty furniture a thousand times and still find something to be rectified in every change, to solicit her lost appetite with the late and tasteless forest fruits—all this he could do. But to read in her dim eye wants he could not satisfy—to know that assistance was so near, yet not dare to implore it—that there were ten thousand alleviations of pain and weakness for which she languished, and which the wishes of solitary affection could never bring—that he had often scoffed at, and wasted as superfluous, what now he would welcome as a treasure—this he could not do, it was insupportable; he almost reviled the elements as voluntary ministers of mischief, and was only restrained from violence of complaint by the fear of alarming the sufferer for whom he trembled.

Filippo returned, tottering under a burden of everything that inventive solicitude could provide. A plenteous meal was prepared, and a fire kindled, which they recollected, if seen, might confirm the superstition of the peasantry, and throw a stronger spell of fearful security around their wild abode. The intelligence of Filippo corresponded with their conjectures. Annibal was supposed to have perished in the fall of the tower which had freed him; no suspicion of his escape existed. Of Ildefonsa he had heard nothing, but the same opinion respecting her prevailed in the convent; for the monk who was employed to assassinate her, dreading the rage of Schemoli and the abbess, averred that she had perished by the blow he gave her as he fled; and as the convulsions of the earth had ravaged even the subterranean apartments of the convent, breaking up vaults and overthrowing shrines, the disappearance of her corse excited neither surprise nor suspicion. Seated now amid comparative abundance, while Annibal saw, or hoped he saw, the wan cheek of Ildefonsa grow warm in the ruddy light, and Filippo, with characteristic vivacity, laughed, shouted, and bounded round his master and the signora (for no influence could prevail on him to sit or partake the meal with them), each of them recounted the extraordinary circumstances under which they had again met, after being separated by the rudest shocks of both natural and moral violence.

The escape of Annibal has been already related; that of Ildefonsa (who, after being preserved from assassination by Ippolito, was afterwards separated from him by the shock of an earthquake,) was owing to the numerous subterranean passages of the convent, which extended to the brink of the river, and into one of which she had been precipitated by the vaulted roof opening beneath her feet, and enclosing her with such expedition that Ippolito saw her no more. She had descended with little hurt, and soon discovered where she was by the lamps which glimmered before a subterranean shrine of St Ursula. At this she was prostrating herself for protection, when another chasm yawned over her head, and she beheld through it, when her terrors permitted her to see, Filippo, who extended his arms and called on her in

tones of encouragement. She was about to avail herself of his plan for extricating her, when the voice of Annibal, whom the windings of the passage excluded from the light, reached her ear, and, lighting the extinguished torch which her assassin had dropped, she pursued the sound, and discovered him suspended, as she related, over a cavity, into which a step had been destruction. On concluding their narratives, both turned to Filippo, whose account was brief and simple. On learning the imprisonment of his master, he had in vain supplicated to be permitted to share it with him; he had been driven from the convent with violence; but no one, as he said, could drive him from sitting down beneath its walls. Here, though he knew his presence was no protection, he yet dreaded there was danger in his absence, and continued, therefore, to linger and to lament, till he was astonished by the sight of two figures, one of whom he knew to be Ildefonsa, descending from the gardens of the convent and gliding along the brink of the river. His mind was, at first, clouded by fantastic fear, but when he could no longer doubt that the figure he saw was "the real and living signora," he prepared to follow her, assured of safety from the protection that was extended to her. Just at this moment a commotion of the earth separated the figures he was observing; the lady sunk into the ground, and the cavalier was wafted down the stream with a rapidity that mocked the sight. The lady, however, was Filippo's principal object; he observed that the shocks were slight and partial, though the convent, situated on an eminence, almost excavated by subterranean recesses and mined by the lapse of a river, was shaken to ruins by it. When personal danger, therefore, had ceased, he examined that part of the bank where Ildefonsa had disappeared. The hollow sound of his steps convinced him there was a cavity beneath; the apertures made by the earthquake were but slightly and irregularly closed with masses of earth and stone. He removed with his hands those which obstructed the spot near which he beheld her sink, and, by the lights which twinkled in the cemetery far beneath, he discovered Ildefonsa, prostrate at the shrine of St Ursula. From thence her liberation was easy.

The evening was passed in congratulations on their marvellous escape, in anticipations of future security and happiness, and by Annibal, in regret that his brother had been so near, unseen by him, and had probably perished in the disastrous commotion of the night. This regret was increased by a disappointed wish of meeting and conferring with Ippolito, between the cause and object of whose persecution and his own he began to trace a resemblance pregnant with singular suspicions. Filippo promised, if possible, to procure some intelligence of him in his next excursion; and Annibal, then retiring to the porch of the hut, left Ildefonsa, with unprompted delicacy, to the sole possession of her humble apartment.

As Ildefonsa's wound was slight, and her weakness local, she recovered rapidly, and the assiduous tenderness of Annibal was aided by the vivacious intelligence of Filippo, who related with strong humour the conjectures of the superstitious villagers about Annibal and Ildefonsa, of whose disastrous passion they imagined that the figures seen dimly on the brink of the river were a visionary representation; and they had more than the praise of common courage who would venture at night near the spot where the shade of the ill-fated votaress was supposed to seek the sanctuary of consecrated rest, and that of her tempter to be wafted down the current in a bark into which he was inviting her, and whose progress tracked the waters with furrows of flame.

Of Ippolito Filippo failed to procure any intelligence, as he had been apprehended immediately on his arrival at Puzzoli by the order of the Inquisition, and the secrecy which marks the proceedings of that tribunal rarely permits a vestige of its victims to be traced beyond the precincts of its walls. That the brothers were so near without meeting was not surprising; Bellano, and the village where Annibal resided, though near the convent, were in opposite directions, and Ippolito had delayed at the former only one night.

Ildefonsa's health was now so far restored that her care was transferred to Annibal, whose attendance on her, she feared, had impaired his strength and spirits, and she urged him repeatedly to excursions in the forest, whose "wild and woodland scenery would breathe freshness on his mind and frame." He declined her importunities, or, when he complied, it was for a short time, and with reluctance.—"Why will you not," said she, earnestly, "go out and wander in the forest for an hour?"—"Why will you press me thus?" said Annibal, who appeared to have reasons for his reluctance he could not avow.—"Because it is now the hour, and ——"—"The hour! who told you this was the hour?" said Annibal, wildly.—"Do I

not know that night is the time for you?"—"Why, what is the meaning of this? why do you thus dwell on night?"—"Because it is unsafe to walk by day, and expose us to discovery."—"True, true; was that all?" said he, vaguely.—"That was all, in truth."—"Perhaps," said he, after a gloomy pause, "there is still less safety by night than day."—"I do not understand you."—"So much the better," said he, impatiently.—"But why," said Ildefonsa, with fond tenacity, "why will you not wander for an hour along the path you described so vividly to me the other evening, where the trunks of trees and lingering foliage are tinged with colours richer than summer, and the pale gleams of sky between the branches, intersected with spray and fibre, resembled, you said, the narrow-shafted lights of a cloistered passage? you described it so forcibly, I thought I saw you there."—"Saw me there!" said Annibal, starting; "heaven forefend! No, no, impossible: you did not see me there."—"I would I were able," said Ildefonsa, reverting to her indisposition.—"I tell you, you would not be able," said Annibal, emphatically.—"And will you not wander this evening?"—"No; I dread that I should lose myself, if I did."—"I think I could discover you if you did."—"Discover me!"—"Yes, discover you; is there a den or a labyrinth there?"—"There is, and it is dark and horrible."—"You drew me out of one that was indeed dark and horrible, and I think you have tended me so well, I should have strength to extricate you."—"I fear you have not," said Annibal, in a hollow voice; "no power can avail to reach or to raise me."—"Heavens! you talk and look as if you had fallen into it already."—"Not yet—I have not yet," said he, absently; "but do not press me to walk in the forest." She ceased; for she perceived he was answering his own thoughts, nor did she venture to mention the subject again; for though on all others Annibal spoke with the fervour of a lover, and the chaste solicitude of a husband, yet the slightest allusion to the forest, or to his nightly excursions there, at once overshadowed him with a gloom which was only interrupted by starts of moody abstraction.

Yet she observed that, when unsolicited, he often stole forth, and returned with the quick step and startled eagerness of one who feared or fled pursuit.

At length Ildefonsa found herself no longer compelled by weakness to retard their journey to Puzzoli, for which Filippo set out to make preparation. The joy this intelligence inspired she shared in an eminent degree herself.

In spite of the high and well-grounded confidence she felt in Annibal's pure and noble love, her timidity was terrified by her dangerous and adventurous prospects, and her delicacy retreated from being the daily associate of men, who, however generous, tender, and respectful, repelled her from the very circumstance of their sex. Her confidence resembled the image of Cybele, which resisted every effort to remove it till it was drawn along by the zone of a virgin. Her feelings, delicate, vivid, and evanescent, resembled the Peri of the eastern mythology, whose subtle essence is subsisted by perfumes, and whom a grosser aliment than the fragrance of flowers would confound and destroy.

Early in the evening of the day previous to their departure, Filippo, who had exerted more than usual diligence, arrived at the hut of the forest, with every requisite for their journey. He had engaged horses and a guide, whom they were to meet in the morning at the skirts of the wood; and with the natural joy of a domestic, who believes where there is splendour there must be safety, he described the munificent affection and superb palace of the prior, where he expected soon to behold them blazing in magnificence and fortified by power, scarce remembering the mischiefs of vulgar malignity at the distance to which they were removed, and dispensing pardon or punishment to the wretches from whose dungeons they had recently emerged themselves. Annibal and Ildefonsa listened to his sanguine promises with confidence, tempered by remembered sufferings; and satisfaction, exalted by the benevolence of mutual passion.—"And shall we," said Ildefonsa, "remember the hut that sheltered us in the forest, and the cluster of pine under which we met in the garden of the convent?"—"I shall," said Annibal, "for there you first owned you loved me."—"And I," said Ildefonsa, "for I passed every interval of your absence I could spare on that spot. Will you forgive me, Annibal? I thought those hours even pleasanter than those to whose remembrance I devoted them. There is a nameless charm which the places where we have met those we love derive even from the loss of their presence. I can delight in, but I cannot define it. 'Tis the faded wreath, 'tis the dim light of the banquet that has ceased, but

whose luxuries still linger on the sense; 'tis the fairy circlet that prints the field with brighter green when the elf-dance is done, and the whisper of their music is low."—"You are an enthusiast, love!"—"I am, and I am glad of it, for you are gloomy; life and reality have not joys enough for you, and I have power to draw them from another sphere, even from that where I sought them before I knew you. When the wayward fit is on you, I will spread wings you have not yet seen, and fly into other regions; and there, like the sylphs I have imagined saw in a summer noon, employing a hundred tiny pencils to paint the rose-leaf, and fluttering their fairy plumage to give coolness to the breeze, or diffuse the breath of the lily; so will I flutter about, collecting stores of mental sweetness and beauty to pour over your head, like the balm of the enchanter, that dissolves the sullen spell of sleep. I have heard of masquerades in the world; I will put my mind in masquerade for you; I will call up the airy shapes of existence, past, future, impossible; I will invest them in shapes, now sportive, now solemn, now wild. I will feast you with forms of visionary beauty, brighter because unseen by the world's eye. I will bid them pour strange music in your ear, sweeter because none but yours ever caught it."—"Sweet, sweet love!" said Annibal, kissing her hands with unresisted fervour, "you witch me with your blandishments; will you be thus lovely, thus enchanting in the world? will your fancy flutter thus wildly, and warble thus sweetly, in the gross atmosphere that shall soon enclose it?"

"I do not know; I have heard that the world is fatal to mental pleasures; that few who mix in it preserve their fancy, and fewer still their sensibility. But granting that my feelings were sometimes the victims of deception or disappointment, and selfish levity derided what it never experienced, still, as those feelings withered, my judgment would ripen, and the tears that flowed over my young mind's wasted prime would be assuaged by the lesson that their fall had ameliorated my heart." Annibal, who had fallen into the "wayward fit" as she spake, now interrupted her with conjectures relative to the picture which so strongly resembled her, and the mystery which overshadowed her birth and infancy, so strangely under the control of a nameless persecutor.

"Nay, if you are for a romance," said Ildefonsa playfully, "I will call for Filippo's mandoline, and sing you a sad tale of a lady and a knight so very deep in love and woe, none ever resembled them but the Fugitives of the Forest." At this moment they heard Filippo touching his mandoline in the porch of the hut, and, caught by the wild prelude, listened to a ballad he had learned from some woodland minstrel.

Oh, far he fares! though his step is light,
His heart is heavy, sore;
And dank around fell the sweepy shower,
And shrilly the wind did roar.

Oh! was it a flash of lightning blue
That lit the briery dell,
Or rush from cottage lattice low,
Or taper from hermit cell?

Whate'er it be he faster hies,
Whate'er it be he draws nigh,
And down in briery dell so dusk
A circled dance did spy.

And round about a vassal rout,
And some that descants rung;
Too wild, I wis, for mortal ear,
Too sweet for mortal tongue.

"What cheer, what cheer, my revel feere?"
This seely wight did say;
"I joy to see your featly round,
And list your roundelay."

"And who art thou (bold wight we trow),
That hearest the elf-voice sing?
For we be nightly fays that here
Do dance amid the ring."

Then all by unknown impulse strange,
Amid the rout ran he,
While round about the changed shapes
Did dance with shrieking glee.

And every form, ere now so fair,
Grew grim and ghastly to view;
And thin as mist were their shadowy shapes,
And dim their spectre hue.

And the taper's light was quenched amain,
And the music a howl became;
Then shook the ground, and the dancers round
Were wafted in veering flame.

Then his heart beat quick, and his breath grew thick,
And he sunk to the ground outright;
And with a shriek the shadowy crew
Evanish'd from his sight.

Beware, beware, all ye that hear,
As my harp's wild chords I ring!
Beware ye stray through briery dell
Where nightly fairies sing.

They were pleased with the wild melody of this ballad; but when Ildefonsa began her tale of 'Love and Woe,' Annibal listened as to the inmate of another region. She had always the power of recalling other times, and pouring around her hearer the imaginary scenery of her song; she looked the very genius of romantic minstrelsy; her voice was like the sound for which fancy listens amid ruins; her song woke a beam of memory to play on faint and distant images, as the moon, hailed by the nightingale, advances to shed a melancholy light on the mouldering forms of antiquity.

THE BOWER OF ROSE AND EGLANTINE.

Come, sit with me in twilight bower,
The bower of rose and eglantine;
For this still light and evening hour
Best suit with such a lay as mine.

'Tis moonshine all, the lattice fringed
With rosiere rich, the garden pal'd;
And the green path, touch'd by that light,
Glistered like sheeny emerald.

'Twas silence all; deeply she sat
On terrass'd tower and crested spire,
Hush'd the low rippling of the moat,
And woo'd the moonshine's stilly fire.

'Mid these fair scenes, oh! who so fair
As she with pearly coronal?
She leads along a stately knyght,
Whose dark form gleams in ebon mail.

Like knyght and ladye fayre they seem,
Who meet for love in moonshine bower,
Yet sadde was seene that ladye's cheare,
And sadder was her paramoure.

She had him through the garden's maze,
Where faery-rings the green bank studde,
Where opal hues of shadowy light
Dimm'd orient flower and rubied bud.

She had him to the margent trim
Of fountayne that in moonlight played,
Where garden-gleams, and tremulous bowers,
And silver sleepe of veiled flowers,
Like land of faery seemed, throughe mist,
Its soft and shadowy archings made.

But when she had him to the bower,
The bower of rose and eglantine,
How fail my harp's sad tones to tell,
Oh! woeful knyght, that look of thine!

He shook the mail on his harnessed side,
He shook the dark plume on his creast,
He dared not on that ladye look,
Though she hung and wept upon his breast.

That ladye was as bright of hue
As ever shone in princelye bower,
All pale for grief, but sure more fayre
Than if she blushed in beautye's flower.

For she had loved that statelye knyghte
In bowers of rose and eglantine,
And left him for a royal love,*
Whose gawds around her coldly shine.

And fickle woman's worthless pride
Drew tears that o'er her wan cheek fell,
And sorrow and shame had marred her prime,
And stained the charms she prized too well.

And still the thought of her first love
Did hurt her mind with sweet annoy,
It lit a dream more bright than hope,
It woke a grief more dear than joy.

For it was not hope, and it was not joy,
That woke her sunk eye's wandering fire,
'Twas memory, wooing passion's shade,
'Twas grief that glowed o'er dead desire.

As half she sunk into the bower,
The fleckered bower so tremulous bright,
And her wan cheek, like winter rose,
Show'd through the bowery foliage light—

"Oh come with me into the bower,
The bower of rose and eglantine,
And be my spirit's paramour
'Mid scenes that say—Thou still art mine.

"I do not think of thy burnished eye,
Or ringlets of thy dark brown hair,
Or curved brow of ebon quaint,
Or cheek of summer's sunny paint,
Love's forms are faded from my mind,
And, but its soul, nought lingers there.

"Like spirits that in moonshine meet,
We'll talk of love's evanished bliss,
And mingle memory's shadows sweet,
With parting passion's last cold kiss.

"And far and faint, as cloudy tints
That still through westering twilight show,
Dim blazon of departed day,
Forgotten forms of bliss shall flow.

"Then come with me into the bower,
The bower of rose and eglantine,
And be my spirit's paramour,
'Mid scenes that say—Thou still art mine."

The moon was on her tear-bright eye,
The moon was on her breast of snow,
He turned him from the witching sight,
And faltered faint, and deep, and low.

"I cannot come within thy bower,
I cannot melt in moonlight grove,
All these fair scenes are dark and lorn,
For, lady, I no longer love.

"Yet still I see how fair thou art,
Too well I see thou'rt wondrous fair;
As the lone pilgrim's parting feet
Still turn the twilight fane to greet,
Though long my heart has left thy shrine,
Mine eye still loves to linger there.

"'Twere perilous in secret bower
To parley with a form like thine,
And list that bland and breathed spell
That woos the woven eglantine.

"I am a knight of faith unstain'd,
And thou art an high and royal dame,
We may not love like chamber'd page
Nor tempt the losel's wanton shame.

"Oh! lady, loved so passing well,
In dear devotion truly held!
Why was thy love so light and weak?
Why was thy heart by folly spell'd?

"When my nerved arm was first in fight,
When hoary eld my voice rever'd,
When honour plumed my youthful crest,
When ladies loved and warriors fear'd—

"Then thou, like a most blighting frost,
Didst come upon my glorious youth,
O'erthrew my valour's stately stem,
And nipp'd the buds of vernal truth.

"My wane of life comes sadly on,
My voice is heard in halls no more,
My lance has rusted by my side,
The pride of knightly thought is o'er.

"And wouldst thou now—oh! lady cease,
Tempt not my dark and dreamless rest,
I'll bear my load of silent woe,
All, but the fear thou art not blest.

"The diamonds sheen that bind thy brows
Are mock'd by clouds that sadden there,
And they again are dimm'd by tears,
To me than gems more rich, more rare.

"Thou art not blest—oh, that thou wert!
For by my heart's evanish'd joy
So might not false love taint thy bloom,
And late and vain regrets annoy.

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* Mary, sister to Henry the Eighth of England, was attached to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, one of the most accomplished knights of his age; she married the King of France.

" I'd doff this mailed coat of pride,
Wind round mine arm the rosary,
'Vail to the cowl my helmed head,
And breathe my life in prayer for thee.

" Thy dying love's forgotten lair
Should be some hermit's tapered shed,
Thy buried love's untrophied tomb
Some sainted valley's lowly bed.

" But oh! that pale and pined cheek
Bids e'en that hopeless wish be vain,
That wish whose wild, unselfish aim
Now sooths with joy, now stings with pain.

" Oh! come, enchantress, from thy bower,
I may not, must not, talk with thee;
Come but to tell me what I feel—
Tell—is it joy, or agony?

" Still on its light, dew-spangled spray
Hang my warm tear-drops unremov'd,
And still those breathing roses seem,
Oh God!—as sweet as when I lov'd.

" Oh! come, enchantress, from thy bower
I may not, must not, talk with thee;
But I can tell thee what I feel—
The bliss of love's strong agony."

He led her from the bowery shade,
A tear was in her humbled eye,
He led her to the palace-pile,
Nor ear might catch their unbreath'd sigh.

But vestal stole, and penance pale,
That lady's woful ruth did prove,
When told the knell of the requiem bell
That lovely knight had died for love.

To song again succeeded "converse sweet;" and Annibal, whose thoughts had been occupied by the wonders of recent safety and escape, now inquired by what means the extraordinary appearances at the funeral (when he believed her dead) had been produced and conducted. "Of that strange transaction," said Ildefonsa, "I can know but little, but believe that as my death was determined on by my invisible enemy and the abbess, so it was resolved to impose on those who might presume to inquire and examine, by a funeral, in which I was to assume the aspect of a natural death. Had any violence been used, this had been impossible: from the effects, therefore, I conjecture I was lulled by an opiate into the resemblance of death, and in this state I was exposed as a corse, and in this state (after the tumult occasioned by your interposition had ceased) was conveyed to the cemetery of the convent, where your brother rescued me from assassination. It is probable the operation of the drug was limited to a certain period, during which no violence could rouse me; for of the tumult at my funeral, or the wound given me in the vault, I have not the slightest remembrance, though, when my faculties returned, they returned without disturbance or imperfection. This is all I am able to tell or to conjecture, except that I believe the malignity of my enemies was accelerated by the report of your attempts to liberate me; and that, therefore, my existence is of more consequence than they have been willing to allow me to believe."

Annibal was about to join her in this conclusion, when Filippo, grasping his master's arm, pointed with eager silence to the chimney, down which a dark object was slowly descending.

They caught it as it fell into the flames, and examined it with eyes that doubted their own evidence—it was the hood of a monk's habit! With an immediate impulse Annibal rushed out, and at the same moment called to Filippo for his carbine. Filippo, who hastened to him, found him already plunged far into the forest, while Ildefonsa, with fruitless precaution, extinguished the light, and awaited their return in terror that hardly breathed. They returned, after some time, pale and spent. Filippo could not, and Annibal would not, tell anything; he begged of Ildefonsa, in a voice of perturbation, not to be disturbed, and breathed every moment an impatient wish for morning. Morning, however, was yet far distant; and Annibal, examining again the charge of Filippo's carbine, withdrew to the porch of the hut, where he watched in silence. About an hour had elapsed, when a loud shriek from Ildefonsa recalled him. She averred earnestly that she had seen the face and part of the figure of a tall man in drapery, who for some time continued at the casement, viewing her intently. She confessed herself much enfeebled by her fears, and, rising from her couch, entreated Annibal not to quit her for the remainder of the night.

The porch of the hut was secured therefore by an immense log of pine, that had been the table of the recluse, and the party endeavoured to obtain such rest as can be snatched at intervals of fear. In a short time, however, Ildefonsa, whose spirits were too much agitated for sleep, observed Annibal rise, and go to the casement, where, with a variety of silent but earnest gesture, he appeared to confer with some one without. She watched him till her terror could no longer be repressed. "Annibal," said she, gently, "why will you not sleep?"—"I had rather never sleep than be visited by such dreams."—"I fear they are melancholy, indeed."—"How do you know? What have you heard, or fancied you heard?"—"Thrice I have heard you in your broken sleep repeat those mournful words which were the last I heard from you in the garden of the convent."—"What words were these?"—"I cannot repeat

them ; they were about some prediction."—"True, oh, true. Are you sure you heard nothing more?"—"Nothing more."—"If you should, Ildefonsa, do not believe it ; imagine it the voice of fancy ; do not think it proceeds from me ; men cannot answer for what they utter in their sleep ; but should you hear anything, remember to tell it me, and then forget it as soon as you can."—"I will."—"Do not deceive me."—"Deceive you!"—"Yes ; what can I trust, when my own senses are false?"—"Trust me."—"Ah, many have been betrayed by those who watched their sleep ; I will not sleep again ; would it were morn"

Ildefonsa, for the remainder of the night, counterfeited sleep ; in the morning they were conducted to the opposite verge of the forest by Filippo, where the guide, with horses and mules, awaited them. Filippo had suggested the policy of taking a circuitous road to Puzzoli, (in order to avoid the vicinity of the convent, or the village,) which, in consequence of this arrangement, they did not expect to reach till the close of day. They stopped at a small village at noon, and proceeded on their journey in the mild decline of a genial winter day.

Security and happiness were now so near, that it was perverseness to distrust them. An emersion from dungeons and death, from struggles with the devastations of nature, and a rude shelter in the recesses of a forest, into the pomp of wealth, the luxuries of art, and the beneficence of affection, and this illumined by the rich and radiant light which youth and love shed on the perspective of life, such a prospect was enough to dazzle mental sight even stronger, and better accustomed to the fluctuating objects of life than theirs. They inwardly congratulated themselves on their distance from dangers they would not now mention to each other, and listened with complacency to the garrulous gaiety of Filippo, and the vaunting prolixity of the guide, who, by his own narrative, had encountered and escaped more dangers than Hannibal ever met on the Alps, or Cambyses in the desert.

"I do not like that man," said Ildefonsa ; "there is a mixture of weakness and fierceness in his face I have seldom seen."—"I have seen no face but yours since we quitted the hut," said Annibal. At this moment the guide suddenly turned in a direction opposite to that they had expected. "Where is it you are going?" said Filippo. "Where I was hired to go," said the man. "But this cannot be the direction to Puzzoli," said Annibal. "Will you not permit me to know the road better than you, signor?" replied the man. "I will not permit you to know the points of east and west better than me," said Annibal. "But you—you forget, signor, that I am obliged to take a circuitous road."—"It is not necessary," said Annibal, "since we have quitted the vicinity of the forest."—"It is more so than ever," said the man. "I repeat it is of no consequence," said Annibal. "It is of as much consequence to me as my life," replied the man. Annibal, believing he alluded to the necessity of his safe and faithful conduct as a guide, ceased to contend with him ; and quitting the high road, they pursued a heathy track, whose limits were skirted by a distant wood. "Do you conduct many by this road?" said Ildefonsa. "Not lately, signora," said the man ; "but I have in my time conducted a number."—"It is at least a secret one," said Filippo. "There can be none more so," replied the guide. "And safe and certain?" said Annibal. "Perfectly certain, signor."—"Its gloom oppresses me," said Ildefonsa. "I never heard a traveller utter a complaint of it after his journey was done," observed the man. The track now terminated in the wood, in which no continuance of road or path was visible, but the guide entered it without hesitation, and they followed him. Here they wandered for some time amid the entanglements of an untrodden wood, when the guide suddenly stopped. "I fear I have lost my way," said he, growing pale with unaffected fears. "How!" exclaimed the travellers. "They are not here," said the man, with unrepressed terror, "and I am lost."—"Villain! you are lost!" said Filippo, levelling a carbine at him. "Hold!" said Annibal ; who, though in despair, was deliberate ; he rode up to the man and griped him by the throat—"Villain! you have betrayed us, and betrayed yourself ; you have sold both body and soul to perdition. Hear me, villain! you have but one chance for existence ; conduct us from this forest, and conduct us safely ; my servant and I will ride on each side of you. Come here, Filippo. On each side of you, villain! each with a loaded carbine at your head ; and, by my immortal soul, if I but see you falter, or wince, or think awry (for I shall see your very thoughts), that moment your brains shall be scattered about the road, and your soul be the prey of him who has tempted you to murder!" The man listened, half dead, to his menaces, and turned tremblingly to quit the wood ; but at that moment a shrill whistle pierced their ears, and a number, with whom it was madness to con-

tend, poured around them. Annibal and Filippo turned on them in the fierceness of despair; and the party, enraged at the appearance of resistance, prepared to fire. Annibal, at the same moment, discharged his carbine, and then rushed forward with his sword, when a shot from a villain whom he had wounded grazed his wrist, and compelled him to drop his weapon; endeavouring to recover it with his left hand, he lost his balance, and falling to the ground, was stunned by a blow from one of the assassin's horses, who was terrified at feeling his rider fall beneath his feet. In the meantime Filippo, who, in the impulse of a just revenge, had discharged his carbine at the head of the wretch who had betrayed them, before he had time again to load it, was assailed with such determined fury as made it evident his life was the object of the ruffians. He defended himself with courage; but when he saw his master fall, and the lady, who had fainted, surrounded by the band, his arm grew weak, and he perished almost without aiming another blow.

CHAPTER II.

"Thou must speak that which, in its darkest hour
Pushed to extremity, 'midst ringing dinniness,
The ear of desperation doth receive,
And I must listen to it."—Miss Bailey's 'Rayner.'

When Annibal's senses returned, he found himself extended on a bed. He looked round; he was in a low, mean apartment, dimly lit; it was night; a lamp burned near him; and as he distinguished objects, he thought he saw a dark form moving in the distance. Nothing was plain or palpable either to his mind or senses; he felt as if a motion, a breath, would dissolve the objects around him, and plunge him again into insensibility, or the darkness and dreadful imagery of the forest. But when he recognised the figure which advanced on hearing him move, and stood fixedly beside him, he dashed down his head, and hiding it in all the coverings he could catch, exclaimed, "Let me be lost again!" His persecutor, however, would not suffer him to relapse into insensibility. Cordials were prepared, and when they failed, an irresistible stimulant was applied. He mentioned the name of Ildefonsa, and Annibal instantly started up, quickened to the most keen and vivid perceptions of misery. But to awake or satisfy inquiries on the subject of Ildefonsa, was not the purpose of the tempter; he only mentioned her to introduce the prediction concerning their ill-fated loves (which he had uttered in the garden of the Ursuline convent to Annibal), and to appeal to its fulfilment. "The object of your love," said he, "has been torn from you at the moment of possession, and life has changed its complexion at the moment it was becoming bright with hope and joy. Am I a deceiver now?"—"You are a fiend," said Annibal. "You rave still," said Schemoli. "No, my faculties are too perfect; this is night; we are in solitude; you are Lucifer, and I am your prey."—"My minister, and in vain have you sought to shun me; though you take the wings of the morning, I must follow you. Annibal, never can I leave you till the deed for which I am doomed to follow you be done by your hand; the chains which bind a spirit in pain, I know your weak human hand trembles to unlock. I should plead to you for relief in vain; but think on yourself—think on your wanderings, your persecutions, your fear-spent, spectre-ridden life. The hand that dissolves my chain shall also dissolve that which binds, in unnatural union, a human and a departed spirit. Free me from jeopardy, and you free yourself from me; resist, and you drag about with you a restless wanderer, whose shadow shall darken you at noon, and whose feet shall be planted by your midnight bed." Annibal was silent. "What signifies that waving of your hand?—can it reverse the laws of the nether world? You have resisted them, and what are you now?—a fugitive, an exile, a dependent, the outcast of your family; the imprecations of your father pursue you; you are blasted in hope, and love, and fortune. What are you now?"—"I am innocent!" said Annibal. "Yes," said the tempter, "if to resist the laws of destiny be innocent."

Their conference continued all night. It appeared from several passages of it, that since his first visits to the convent where Ildefonsa resided, he had been incessantly haunted by Schemoli in his usual and undisguised form; he met him near the convent—he crossed him in his evening wanderings—he even appeared in his chamber at the house where he lived—ever upbraiding him with his wayward and foolish flight from what it was equally impossible to avoid or destroy—ever maddening him with the suggestion of that subject, so dark and horrible,

which had been the topic of their conferences in the prison-chamber at Muralto. Annibal's dejection (visible both to Ildefonsa and Filippo) had kept pace with his gloomy acquiescence in the belief of an influence exerted over him, with which to contend was alike impossible and impious. This dejection he had eminently betrayed in his last conference with Ildefonsa in the garden of the convent, when he repeated to her a prediction with which his shadowy tormentor had menaced him but an hour before. He had also betrayed it when Ildefonsa pressed him to wander into the forest; for in the forest he had beheld his persecutor, and in the forest he had again been tempted to that crime, whose imaginary burden sat so heavy on his soul. All the predictions of evil were now verified, and the objects whose presence had suspended the powers of his mind, from dwelling on the subject perpetually obtruded on it, were now removed. He had no longer any powers of resistance or disbelief; he saw before him a being, who, he had every reason to believe, had a power and commission not to be disobeyed. Poison could not suspend his existence, nor distance of space his agency. His tale, to a superstitious mind, enfeebled by recent calamity, was irresistibly imposing; and his injunctions, horrible as they were to nature, were justified by his tale.

Annibal's mind was, indeed, naturally strong and sluggish in his operations; but its strength was misapplied; it pursued visionry and falsehood with the conscientious energy of truth; and when it had found it, embraced and adhered to it with a vigorous tenacity that might have honoured virtue. Thus he was betrayed by his very virtues. The stern activity of his intellect had only been employed in the acquisition of dangerous principles, and his unbending firmness of heart only ensured that the blow he struck would be unerring, whether its impulse was derived from vice or from virtue. Such was Annibal in his best hours; but now enfeebled by bodily suffering, distracted by mental pain, his superstition aggravated by his conscience, and his primitive and intimate bias of mind confirmed by external impressions, such as the soberest intellects could hardly oppose, he yielded without resistance of reason, but not without struggles of passion, potent and terrible. The last convulsions of the human mind, the dissolution of the moral principle; the utter abdication of the influence of reason, while her power is retained only to abuse it; the frightful misrule of passion, assumed as a principle, and exalted into a virtue, this it cannot be expected to exhibit, and, if expected, it is not possible. Those dreadful revolutions of the mental system oftener occur in silence—rarely express themselves by groans or gestures; and if they ever employ words, they are only exclamations and inarticulate cries of passion, such as nothing but reality can faithfully represent; and if really represented, would be fled from in horror.

The unhappy young man yielded! But when he had yielded, he exclaimed in agony, "If there were but a parallel in the history of human nature for mine—if there were but another human being like me beset, and like me, lost, I would not utter a murmur!"—"There is, "said Schemoli. "It is impossible!" said his victim. "I will produce him to you," said Schemoli. "It is impossible!" repeated Annibal. "He is your brother!" said Schemoli.

A long pause succeeded this tremendous disclosure, during which Annibal's mind, traversing the distant and connecting the remote, arrived at the conclusion which a meeting with his brother might have long ago supplied. He rose from the bed, on which he had been tossing in agony. "Who, then, are you? Answer; while I have breath to ask you—answer; who are you?"—"I am the stranger of the vault! I am the spirit of the prison-chamber of Muralto!"—"And my brother?"—"His course has been parallel with yours, and its termination will be the same."—"Was this the deed to which he was fated?"—"It was."—"And has he consented?"—"Let himself tell you," said Schemoli, quitting the apartment.

Annibal did not seek to employ the interval of his absence in recollection, for he was now in a state of mind in which reflection was impossible and solitude insupportable. Had Ippolito been disclosed to him in a blaze of lightning, or been dashed at his feet by a whirlwind, it would scarce have drawn from him an exclamation. In a few moments Schemoli returned, accompanied by Ippolito. It was Ippolito; but what a change! Annibal, who had beheld him but a little before he set out for Naples, in the richest glow of beauty and flush of enjoyment, now beheld him a skeleton, meagre, keen, and fiery, the very image of spirit wasting and preying on the ruins of matter. Grey hairs were profusely scattered amid his bright locks, and a wild, restless fire wandered in his sunk eye. They looked at each other without speaking for some time; but Schemoli, perceiving the dawn breaking through the narrow windows, hastily

closed them, secured the door, trimmed the lamp, and retired, after having excluded every gleam of daylight.

The two brothers were left alone. There were no starts of passion, no sallies of tragic violence; they were beyond them now. No two men of this world, sitting down to confer on their joint business, in the cold terms of life, ever discussed it more dispassionately. They now discovered what might have been discovered long before; that, under different forms and trains of suggestion, they had been led by the same hand and to the same point; but this discovery suggested no fear or hope of deception; the single exertion of such powers appeared beyond the reach of man; united, therefore, it was an evidence that the being who exerted them could not be human.

Ippolito repeated to his brother the circumstances that had occurred to him since his quitting Naples.—"On the day," said he, "that I was visited by the stranger, as I have called him, in the prison of the Inquisition at Puzzoli, an earthquake shattered to atoms the tower in which I was confined, and liberated me. At that time I would have leaped into fire, water, earth, to have escaped from him. I am not so weak now as to believe that mortal elements can protect me from him. I sprung out upon a mole which extended from the island rock upon which the prison stood; half the surviving inhabitants of the town were crowded on it, embarking in vessels, barges, anything that would bear them from the land. I leaped on board the first I saw; it was a small trading vessel bound to Sicily. The steps of a fugitive, and the looks of a madman, were no wonder and no disqualification in that hour of distraction. I had money, too, as I since found, for I scattered it last night among a group of pilgrims who were going to beg absolution for one of their body who had committed a murder. As I sprung on the deck, the last words of the stranger rung in my ears,—'Bury yourself under a mountain, and it shall roll back from you! rush to the ocean, and it shall throw you on the shore again! plunge into the grave, and the grave shall break up and resign you to your fate!'—We stood out to sea. I paced the deck all night; I knew not the omens which the seamen knew; I saw them pale and shivering, and asked them what they feared, since they had left the enemy behind, and forget their answer, if they did answer me. As I stood among them a ball of fire settled on the stern, where it glowed blue, and red, and white, and then gliding down the decks disappeared, without singeing a rope. The sailors shook their heads; the surface of the sea was dark and still. It was now night, but we could distinctly hear the cries of destruction from the shore; they could, they said, and many a distracted soul on board echoed the imaginary wail of father, and wife, and child. I heard but one voice—it was that which spake to us just now.

"The wind fell—we became quite becalmed. A luminous sheet spread over the surface of the sea, whose particles looked solid and distinct, and sparkling like stars. A rope let into the waters was drawn up dripping with liquid fire. The passengers, bending over the sides, said they saw strange things in the deep—wrecks of ships long lost, and shapes of others that were to be, and forms that lay like dead men at the bottom, and others that beckoned to them with blue swollen fingers, and called on them in voices like the roaring of waters. I looked also, and saw nothing but the recesses of the vault, the damned flitting of its impy forms, and the bloody heaving breast, and the eternal dagger. I could look no more. There came a sound upon the waters, not like thunder, for it was more terrible; it seemed as if its force alone rent the mast and sails, for they fluttered around us in fragments. The vessel flew before it like a gossamer upon a summer breeze. It stopped—the ocean tossed and heaved, and its whole bottom came surging up with tides of sand, and surf, and wreck; and bodies that had lain there rooted in the bed of ages—things that dreamt of rest till doomsday, they rose whirling above us, mixing with the strife of upper air a chaos of elementary wrath and ruin, then pouring down deluged us with tides of solid fire, and melted stones, and boiling sand, and sulphurous rain. The vessel, half on fire, half buried in the water, staved into a thousand fragments—on those fragments the shrieking crew, dashing themselves, tried to reach the shore, which was not two miles distant. I was the only one which reached it alive—fate was careful for none but me—the world was not to lose its spectacle and its scourge. I was thrown on a bare solitary point of shore, about half a mile from Puzzoli. The stranger was standing there; lightning hissed around his head, and the ocean burst at his feet; neither *could hurt me. I fell, spent* and breathless, at his feet, and he said to me, 'Rush to the

ocean, and it shall throw you back on the shore again.' From that hour I became his; he led me to this desert hut, where I have passed two days without food, or sleep, or prayer. I drink abundantly; my dreams are terrible; they last all day; but reality will banish them. No waking can be so fearful as this sleep: mine eyes are open, but my soul is in a trance of heavy restlessness, of conscious suspension, in which it is undisturbed by human thought; to which even the human voice is an alarm."

Here Schemoli interrupted their conference. He came to prescribe the mode and form of the deed they no longer shrunk to hear named; he unfolded his plan, arranged every part with cold and dreadful precision, without either weakness or sanguinary vaunting; he debated what was important, and he adjusted what was subordinate. He was no longer opposed or interrupted. In consequence of his plan, it was settled that Ippolito should go for that day to Naples, and that Annibal should depart to the seat of the transaction. They were to meet at night.

They were now rising to depart, when Ippolito, in whose heart the yearnings of nature lingered, turned and looked on his brother. Annibal extended his arms, Ippolito sunk into them, and they wept on each other's necks, and kissed each other; their last fraternal, their last human tears, fell on each other's dry wasted cheeks. But they knew their task, and smote away the warm drops, and set their teeth, and drew their breath hard, and tried to belie God's work, and look like villains. They turned for relief to Schemoli, and met amazement—He was on his knees, in agony of prayer; the sweat drops stood on his brow; his body was wound into the dust! They gazed without comment, for they were deprived now nearly of all power of wonder, or any of further fear.

Had they not, the attitude of Schemoli would have inspired even fear. To see Lucifer surrounded by vivid lightnings, is less shocking to the imagination than to see him in the garb of an angel of light. They separated, and found horses prepared to convey them to Naples, and to the neighbourhood of Muralto.

CHAPTER III.

"Hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit,
Secreti celant calles, et myrtea circum,
Sylva tegit; curæ non ipsâ in morte relinquunt."—VIRGIL, Æn. vi. 442.

"Not far from thence the mournful fields appear,
So called from lovers that inhabit there.
The souls whom that unhappy flame invades,
In secret solitude and myrtle shades,
Make endless moans, and, pining with desire,
Lament too late their unextinguish'd fire."—DRYDEN.

IPPOLITO arrived in Naples about dusk. To the servants at the palace, who hardly knew him, he addressed neither question nor order. He hastened to his apartment, around which he looked vacantly for some time, and sadly on the bed; he then rushed into the garden, where Cyprian now spent almost all his time in a little hermitage, where he was entirely occupied by devotion. He saw Ippolito approach, and shrieking with the wildest voice of joy, remained rivetted to the spot. Ippolito entered the hermitage; Cyprian flung his arms around him, but the next moment started from him, and gazed on him in silence. "Do you shudder at the sight of me too?" said Ippolito. "It is his voice—it is his voice!" said Cyprian; "but for that I could not have known you."—"You have scarce seen yet how much I am changed: you have not seen my heart."—"Oh! where have you been, and why have you tarried so long?"—"I know not where I have been: never from Naples in thought. But you, Cyprian—gracious heaven! where have you been, measuring your grave? Is it this dim rising moon that deceives me? You look as pale as the dead; you are wasted to a shadow!"—"Am I? I believe I am: I am spent and worn watching for you; I am very ill: my eyes are almost wept away."—"And why are you in this cold vault-like hut?"—"'Tis my only abode, Ippolito—'tis a structure I raised in memory of one you have perhaps forgotten, but who never forgot you. Here I have passed my days and nights, thinking on you, and praying for her."—"And this little mound with the cross on it is her grave?"—"It is, and this inscription is to be laid on it when her remains are brought there." Ippolito *read the lines by the light of the moon.*

THE INSCRIPTION.

"In early youth she had sensibilities that were strong, and an imagination that was stronger. Her mind, therefore, fluttered in pursuit of ideal happiness, and ideal happiness was all she was ever doomed to know; for she loved—she loved where to hope was madness yet to be disappointed was to be lost. From that moment life was darkened by a shade, which the gleams of passion's wild and wayward joy sometimes chequered, never dispelled. She sat down in lone and unsuspected misery, and wooed a dream for comfort. But there is a place where the wailings of sorrow cease, and even the pulse of passion is cold and still; there the foot of mortal pilgrimage turns in hope; there the world-weary spirit reaches and rests; there she rests at last with her beloved,her heart moulders near him for whose love it was broken; her lip wastes near his for which it withered with pining. There she rests at last with her beloved, and none can now divide, and none will now condemn her. Let those who would arraign her errors think upon her sufferings: those who can weep for her sufferings will feel they were repaid by her end."

"It is sad," said Ippolito; "but I have no time for sickly sorrow now; I came here only to depart; I must begone this hour."—"Begone! where, wherefore, where is it you must begone?" said Cyprian. "I know not whither; into some country dark and unknown, into some land that is very far off; but still I know not yet where I go."—"Oh, why is this? Oh, my heart sickens to hear you!"—"I have done a thing against which the laws are strongly armed; the world frowns upon me, fortune has nothing good for me; I must begone to-night."—"Oh God! what is this that comes in clouds and darkness? let me see it, let me but see it. What can you have been tempted to that can expose you to danger? The laws in this country are not so rigid to the rich and powerful. What is it you have done?"—"What is that which chases a man from his country, which marks him with horror and reprobation wherever he is followed and discovered, which———"—"Oh, I cannot tell: horrid thoughts are crowding on me too fast to utter; but if it be all I fear, the habits of society are but too favourable to such offences: you need not fly for killing your enemy in a duel."—"I did not kill him in a duel, he was no enemy of mine; in cold-blooded malevolence I butchered one who had never offe ded me, with such circumstances of horrid fiendish cruelty, that nature would make the very stones of the hall of justice cry out against me if I were acquitted."

Cyprian fell to the ground; Ippolito approached to raise him. "I am strong, I am well; I am, indeed." He struggled to say, "This is but folly, nothing; let us begone this moment; I am strong and ready to go."—"You are strong! Ah, Cyprian, I knew it would be thus; I knew I was a cursed wretch, forsaken by nature and affection. No, you cannot go with me, you cannot bear me; those sunk eyes, those shaking hands, those open and bloodless lips, they all speak your natural, your virtuous horror of me. I have done a deed that puts me at an immeasurable distance from human sympathy; I am so far out, that even you, who stand last and longest on the shore, have ceased to see me in the distance."

"Oh, cruel, cruel!" wept Cyprian, crawling after him on his knees. "Oh! if you could but know, and when you do know, as shortly you must—I not follow! I not bear you! Show me the hand that did the murder, and I will kiss it, if you will not drive me away; I will follow you in quiet misery, I will smile on you as in our days of innocence, and only weep when you are at rest. I will wander with you, beg with you, famish with you."—"You draw every picture of misery; you will wander, you will famish with me! Am I so very lost? is there no one bright speck or atom in futurity for me? must we be thus wretched?"—"Oh, no, no!" said Cyprian, eagerly; "there is a hope for penitence; there are gracious and humble joys unknown to the proud that have never erred. Let us go hence to decent indigence and retirement, to some place remote from the din of folly, that is never necessary to happiness, and always unfavourable to virtue. I will go with you to the vallies of Switzerland or the mountains of Spain. Many a melancholy pleasure dawns upon me in our hermit haunt of penitence. Conference, when you are cheerful; the sound of my harp, when you are pensive; the consciousness of safety, when disposed to repine, and the remembrance of error, when tempted to passion: these will be with us in our valley of sorrow, and who that has these can be dissatisfied?"—"*Is it, then, possible for* a murderer to know peace?"—"I will pray for your peace," said *Cyprian, tremblingly.* "*But is* it possible that a murderer can have peace?" said Ippolito,

vehemently. "All things are possible with him whom we have to do with," answered Cyprian fervently. "May I, indeed, be forgiven?"—"If the penance to which I here devote every hour of my remaining life can procure you peace or pardon, you shall," said Cyprian, falling on his knees and kissing the crucifix that was on the tomb. "Keep your vow," said Ippolito, in a fearful tone. "What is it you mean?"—"You have eased my soul of its burden; you have taught me there is pardon for a murderer. The deed is not yet done; but if it can be pardoned, why should it be delayed?"—Oh! what words are those? Oh, plunge not your soul and mine in wilful, unresisted ruin! There can be no pardon for premeditated guilt; there is no mercy for the presumptuous offender, who offends in the confidence of forgiveness, and converts the long suffering of Heaven into the minister of sin.

Ippolito was gone. He had spoken peace to his conscience by the wild sophistry of despair, and drawn from the abused lips of purity an unintentional encouragement to guilt, and, pacified by this wretched device, he rushed from the palace.

Of him whom he left behind, no more was heard; Cyprian was beheld no more. Affection had no more to contend with, nor had sorrow any further power of suffering. His existence was rendered vain by the frustration of the purpose to which it had been devoted, and for which alone it had been supported; and he felt how dreadful it was to hope no more, to have in life no further worth or use, aggravated by the recollection that his had been voluntary choice: his, therefore, was merited suffering.

* * * * * *

Annibal was conducted by Schemoli to the neighbourhood of Muralto; he was led into a hut and supplied with refreshments, and pacified with the promise he should be disturbed by no intruders. To all this he listened in silence, and Schemoli was preparing to leave him. "Whither are you going!" said Annibal. "I am now going to the castle; I shall return at night, and bring your brother with me; I will then lead you both to the very apartment."—"And I to remain alone till night?"—"You must."—Impossible! I dare not trust myself; do not you trust me. I shall be mad, incapable of doing the work that is fastened on me; incapable of anything, even of mischief. What! to be six hours alone, with such thoughts as mine! you are mad to propose it."

Schemoli appeared disconcerted; at length he said, "If I bring you to the castle, you must consent to remain alone and silent till the hour arrives."—"Yes; I can remain alone and silent in the castle, for the sounds of life will be around me; but lead me not to any apartment I have before been accustomed to; let me see no place I have inhabited while my heart was light and innocent."

Schemoli led him to the castle unobserved; such was its extent, and so many parts were ruinous and uninhabitable, that this, though it was only twilight, was no matter of difficulty. The apartment to which he was conducted he had never seen before, nor did he examine it now; he paced up and down, listening for the sound of steps or voices, of which he heard but few and distant. It was not impossible that, had he devoted even this interval to reflection, he might have recalled his direful resolution; but it is the curse of a desperate state of mind to consider the exclusion of reflection as a species of duty; and his resolution, therefore, continued unaltered, because unexamined.

Night approached; through a panel in the door he saw light twinkling, he believed it was Schemoli approaching, and determined to meet him at the door, not to be called and chidden to his task. He therefore hastened to the door, without perceiving it was not the door by which he had entered. It gave way, and through it he saw a suite of apartments, in the last of which lights were burning. With an impulse for which he did not seek to account he entered them; all was still and deserted. He reached the last, and paused to examine the strange diversity of objects it contained. It was furnished even with modern elegance, but repelled approach by an oppressive smell of medicines. Silver branches sparkled on a table of marble, on which stood several phials; beside it was extended on a sofa a lady apparently asleep. Annibal advanced, and beheld Erminia, her very self, as he first beheld her in the picture of the secret apartments. The sylvan robe of green velvet, overspread with her long loose tresses, and clasped with diamonds, the veil of gold gauze falling over her face, reached the ground. Her sleep was uneasy, she moaned often, and at length throwing aside *her veil with a quick motion,* which yet did not awake her, she discovered the face of *Ildefonsa!*

Her face presented the same strange and frightful contrast as the furniture of her apartment; the deep fixed colour that burned on her cheek was evidently artificial, while her wan and purple lips seemed withering in the parched breath they exhaled; her bosom, decked with pearl and shaded with ringlets, was displayed with a meretricious excess, yet the cold drops that trembled on her forehead seemed forced out by the approaches of dissolution. All power of exclamation was denied to Annibal. He felt nothing but wonder, saw nothing but witchery; the presence of her he believed lost, her solitary pomp, the mixture of emblems of death and magnificence that surrounded her, had she slumbered till the day of judgment, he could only have gazed on her. But after a few inarticulate murmurs of painful sleep she started, and awoke and beheld him. Even then he could not speak; he knelt beside her, he grasped her hands, he gazed earnestly on her face. "I could not die till I saw you, my beloved," said Ildefonsa. "Die!" repeated Annibal, in a voice which cannot be described. Ildefonsa pointed to one of the vials, and sunk back on the sofa. Annibal reached it to her silently—her face was convulsed—she swallowed it, and then another. "Will this," said she, "give me breath to tell you how I have been brought here, and what I have suffered?" Again her speech was impeded. "Oh, no, I cannot; all that remains of life is scarce enough to tell how I have loved—how dying, I love you still. We were not doomed to be happy here; this earth has no good things for us; the storm has been with us, but its roar comes far and faintly now, and where I am hastening it shall not be heard any more for ever. Oh, my love, my gentle love, distract not my dying hour by this violence; rend not your hair, nor gnash your teeth thus; I was calm till you came; it is an hour in which I had rather think of you than behold you."

Again she was convulsed, and sunk backward. Annibal supported her with that firmness of silent and terrible strength which seems to the sufferer himself like the effect of a spell, and which he dare not breathe lest he dissolve. During the remainder of the night she was sometimes convulsed, sometimes quiet, but never articulate or lucid; in calm desperate agony he had to watch the slow expiration of sense, the long, severe strife of nature in extremity, grasping at relief fitfully, and again relaxing its grasp. He had to behold her die without relief, and without discovery of her murderer.

In her struggles he thought at times he heard her name his father. He continued to gaze on the corse till the clock struck twelve; the sound smote on his soul; he caught up the taper and rushed from the apartment. In his own he found Schemoli and Ippolito. The brothers communicated not, by word, by groan, by look. "It is the hour," said Schemoli; "all is still; I will dismiss the attendants." He departed; he was absent for an hour, during which not a word was uttered by his victims. They could not have heard each other; there was a storm, a storm which rocked the castle, and which they did not hear.

Schemoli returned; they did not see his altered expression till his motions compelled their notice. He dashed the lamp from his hand, he fell at their feet, he wound himself round their knees, pushed back their drawn swords, and then bared his own breast to them. Insensible to everything but the terrible purpose of the hour, they scarce saw him at their feet. Still unable to speak, he gasped, he writhed, he howled, he pointed to the apartment to which he was about to conduct them, till, believing they were abused by the mows and grimaces of a fiend, they broke from and left him extended on the floor. His pointing hand instructed them too well, and his shadow seemed to flit before them to the very door of the apartment.

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CHAPTER IV.

"——— Ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons
The shard-born beetle with his drowsy hum
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note."—SHAKSPEARE.

"My senses blaze—my last, I know, is come;
My last of hours. 'Tis wondrous horrid! now—"—LEE.

On that night it was observed by the attendants that the count was remarkably agitated. His confessor had been twice summoned to him. On his quitting him for the last time, he desired *the countess to attend him*; and when she came the attendant, as usual, quitted the apart-

ment. They were two hours in conference. His spirits were usually calmed by the stern energy of his wife, and by the influence she had acquired over him from the superior strength of her character; but on this night her influence failed, and after two hours vainly spent in the sophistry of guilt and palliations of misery, he remained gloomy and agitated. "Why do you walk up and down in the dark corners of the room, listening to the wind, and looking on your shadow?" said the countess. "Sit down by this ruddy fire; I have trimmed the tapers, and everything is bright and cheerful."—"Are they, indeed?" said the count. "They are. Come, sit on this seat beside me, and be calm."—"No, no; when I am in the darkest corners of the room I know the worst. I can look upon no part of the chamber that is not brighter than that I am in; but when I sit in the circle of the light I dare not look beyond it; the shades are all in terrible motion beyond the very edge of the taper."—"Why will you bend your mind to these sickly fancies?"—"They bend my mind to them."—"What is it that oppresses you to-night?"—"That which oppresses me every night."—"There is something unusual in your agitation to-night; your looks, your very language are altered."—"Are they, indeed? in truth, are they? Nay, 'tis no wonder; man's ordinary frame would sink under one hundreth part of what I daily or nightly undergo; yet my strength is unimpaired. Not a hair of my head is changed. My mind seems to have absorbed all power of suffering into itself, and its faculty of suffering, we are told, is immortal. I have much to harass and disturb me of present and imminent fear. How do I know what danger that fugitive may be preparing for me in the remotest region of Italy? or his brother, who has hurried from Naples, no one knows whither?"—"Do not suffer yourself to be dejected; the confessor will discover them, be sure, and then we will have nothing further to fear."

"Have I not perpetually before me a remembrancer, a living remembrancer, who combines the imagery of fancy and reality, who recalls at once the living and the dead? The roof of my castle seems to shake over me while she is beneath it."

"And was it not your own fond fantasy to deck her up in that array? Like a child, you run from a mask you have yourself painted; but whether real or fantastic, your fears may cease to-night—she has sunk into a sleep from which she will probably wake no more."—"What have you done?"—"That which must be done, and which, therefore, they who do soonest do best. Would you be ruined by the babbling waywardness, the whining love of a girl?"—"I could not have destroyed her."—"Weak and inconsistent! what would you have? you tremble in danger, and you pine in security. What would you have?"—"Ask me not what I would have—I would have what no power can do for me—I would have time turned backward, and deeds undone—I would have impossibilities—I would have peace, and one night of unbroken sleep!"—"That is impossible."—"I do not want to be told so. Secure!! my security is like the fortress of a giant—moated round with blood; it is like the tower of the Persian tyrant—a pile of human skulls. I am become a wonder to myself. I could not once have borne to think what I now must bear to be. In the first stage of my progress, I saw but a single act necessary to success. I revolted from its first view; but habitual contemplation, and, above all, the facility of repenting one solitary act of guilt, bribed me to its perpetration. Had it been joined in the remotest bearing with another crime—had but another link of the dark chain been shadowed in my mind's view, I had never been guilty. But it is the policy of Satan. I had scarce dipped in blood when I found I must swim in it. Another act but led to another; to retain what I had acquired, demanded more of the means that acquired it. I found myself tottering on a point, which I deemed the central hold of success; I tried to rise, and found myself tottering still. I look back now on a length of crimes that scar the sight—I look round, and feel I totter still. I look upward, and see the point of safety remoter than ever, and that I have been lost, and trebly lost, for nothing! Where will this end?"—"In safety and eminence at last," said his dauntless wife; "in a height from which we shall look down on envy and danger alike, and feel no sacrifice too great to obtain."—"Safety!" said Montorio, growing pale, "how can you talk of safety, and hear the yelling of the blast? Hark! how it bursts, wild and horrible! the casements will give way; and now it sinks again, and wails away so faint and distant. Oh, that dolorous, sobbing, spent sound! could it be the wind, Zenobia? What if it were?"—"For shame! will you run mad listening to the wind?—will you conjure the innocent elements into phantoms of fear? Listen! it is gone already—it whistles over the cottages beneath your castle, and does not

wake a sleeper there: it is fallen now—the night will be calm."—"Do you think so, good wife—do you indeed think so? I pray you look out at the casement, and tell me the shape and wuftage of the clouds, and whether the wrack flies swift, and where the winds are chasing it."—"Look abroad yourself; you are near the casement, and the flitting clouds will amuse you."—"Amuse me! eh! if you knew what forms are riding in the darkness when I venture to look out—ay, flitting across the casement with palpable motion, and when I start, beckoning from the ridgy clouds, but not like them, gliding away—if you saw this!"—"Are you the slave of such fantastic folly? I would sooner tear mine eyes out than let them abuse my reason thus."—"If my eyes were torn out, I should see them still."—"Oh! these are the dreams of fearful solitude—the very whispers of the place and season. I should run mad with apprehension, if I shut myself up in a lone tower, and listened to the wailings of the wind."—"Ay, 'tis the wind I shrink from. Whenever the storm howls round my castle, I think of the night when——hark! hark! how loud it is now! Just such was the sound, and such was the season——"—"You mistake, it was at the close of autumn."—"I do not mistake; it is spring, and summer, and winter, and autumn with me; I hear it in every wind that blows."

"Let us go then to Naples; I know not why we came to this house of horrors; let us go to Naples. I will go with you, and we will have feasting and jollity. In the tumult of festivity you will forget these thoughts, that ride your fancy like the hags of vision; you shall go forth and enjoy your state like a magnificent noble, and all shall be well."—"No, I cannot, it besets me there; and how can I trust myself amid a crowd, who dread to be discovered to my own lackeys? My life is wasted in watching a secret. When I was last in Naples they dragged me to some assembly. I saw it there—ay, you may gaze, but I saw it plainly as I see you now. As I crossed the portico, it stood opposed to me for a full minute, and looked on me—looked! no, no, it had no eyes; but still it seemed as if it saw me, and I saw it."—"Saw what?"—"Do you not know?"—"No, in truth, you have so many visions and fantasies."—"Why, then, not to avoid its sight again could I utter the name.

He sat down sullenly, and remained silent for some time, then starting up again, listened to the wind. "Did you not tell me," said he, reproachfully, "that the storm had ceased?"—"I am not to blame if the elements will not be at peace."—"And who is to blame," said he, striding up and down gloomily, "that I am trembling here with every change of them? it is destiny's, not mine. If I were a conqueror, a ravager of the earth now, I should lie down in peace; if I were one who had slept after the carnage of thousands, whose bare word had swept off more in one day than all the petty villains of earth would stab darkling in their lives; if I were one who had flung infants and pregnant mothers in the fire, and rested every night lapt in the colours of victory, and stunned by the thunder of my drums; if it were thus, I would be at peace, I would be called a hero by the world, and lie down at last lulled by the acclamations of mankind. Oh, if it were thus! Yes, it is this cursed domestic sensibility of guilt that makes cowards of us—the deed that makes the hero damns the man. I am lost, because I am pent up in the walls of a castle, and mark myself with the sign of the cross; the magic chain of evil is the fear."—"I have never seen you so wrought by fear and dismal thought as this night."—"'Tis true; this night has a presage with it, I cannot, cannot——"—"Has the confessor been with you?"—"Twice."—"And has he given you no comfort, as he is wont to do?"—"Ay, marvellous comfort—solitary penance for an hour; and so good night, Zenobia. Zenobia, do you pray at night?"—"I do."—"Indeed! and fervently, truly?"—"Ay, but I do not trust to prayer alone."—"What do you mean?"—"Look here," said the countess, and withdrawing her vest, showed beneath an iron band that encircled her waist, and was closed under her breast by a spring, whose point entered it."—"Who devised this most horrible penance?" said her husband.—"They who could execute it could alone devise it."—"The infliction is most sharp and agonizing, but the consequences are worse. Remove that dreadful zone, Zenobia; the corrosion of the iron——"—"Will produce a cancer; I know it."—"And the consequence must then be——"—"A terrible operation; I have sustained it already. Eight months I wore it on the other side; it terminated as you suggest. I submitted to the operation without discovery and without a groan; and when it was over, I removed the sharp point to the other side."

Montorio smote his hands together. "What have e become? what have we made our-

selves?"—"That which I would bear this, and tenfold this to be, great and powerful, one of the eminent on the earth. Let any curse be mine, but that of high-born, high-thoughted beggary; the habits of a noble, the spirit of a sovereign, and the fortune of a mendicant. On my earliest view of life, I saw but one thing that it was good to be; the price was high, and the condition difficult; but since it is accomplished, I will not affront my pride by thinking I gave for it too much. I am the possessor of rank and magnificence; all that is seen of me is great and splendid. Let the world be deceived, and I must be happy; yes, I am happy."—"And will the other world also be deceived?"—"No; but it will be pacified, if our priests tell us true. They say St Peter's keys are of gold; I have one of IRON that cannot fail. If penance can avail, what can be so powerful as that I voluntarily do?"—"I know of but one made more severe."—"More severe! what is it?"—"That I must undergo to-night."—"What! is it the scourge, or iron?—"No."—"Do you rend your flesh with sackcloth?"—"No."—"What can it be?"—"An hour of solitude," answered Montorio, turning on her with the visage of a fiend in woe.

The countess was retiring. "Hold," said he, "are you going, already going? Am I alone? Does he make me undergo this, that I may think less of my final mansion? I cannot bear it; no, I cannot be alone, Zenobia; send the confessor to me; I will confess to him that expedient which we adopted to pacify Heaven, and avert the curse from our house. I have not confessed that yet, I have never told it; perhaps it may move him to mitigate my penance."—"Perhaps it may; he shall attend you."

She retired, and the confessor was again summoned. Their conference was long, and marked with singular emotions. In the progress of it, the count avowed that secret with which he had fed an inward, doubtful hope of palliation for many years. The monk was sitting on the chair when (in the posture of the confessor) he received it; he started, as if his soul was smote within him. In a voice, whose tones were convulsed with unknown emotions—whose tones were audible from the bare strength of their meaning, almost without aid of articulation—he demanded a repetition of the confession. His penitent, overpowered, he knew not how, hesitated. The confessor repeated his demand, in a voice not human; the count again faltered it out with mechanical fear. The confessor paused, as if to assure himself of what he heard; the seat shook under him. The count looked up in his face with amaze, his cowl had fallen over it, and in his agitation it remained untouched: and his figure, thus dark, silent, and shaking with unuttered thoughts, was more like the phantom of a terrible dream than the living and actual form of man. At length, spurning aside his chair, he rose, and was rushing from the apartment. "Father," called the count, "you have not given me absolution."—"Nor ever will," yelled the monk; "nor ever shall myself seek or obtain it." He was gone.

His penitent, long accustomed to starts of passion resembling insanity in the confessor, believed that he was only overcome by the discovery of a new link in that chain of crimes which had for four years been gradually unfolded to his view, without a prospect of their dark termination. Believing, therefore, that the event of this conference would scarce have ended in the mitigation of his penance, he prepared to undergo it, mentally resolving, however, that if after the experience of some moments he found solitude what he feared, he would summon his attendants to the antichamber, and at least hear their steps, and see their lights through the crevices of the door, while he performed the task. He had scarce time to explore the terrors of solitude.

The issue of those dark hauntings by which the brothers had been beset so long, may already be conjectured. The secret crime, so often suggested to them by visionary temptation, they now proceeded, under the influence of visionary terror, to perpetrate. The secret door through which the monk had rushed to deprecate it, in vain, was still open; they advanced through the passage with feelings which he who knows human feelings will hardly inquire or willingly hear. They entered the apartment of their victim; he was on his knees, in that agony of prayer which hears no sound but its own murmurs. They approached unseen; they dared not look at each other: but so intense and single was the impulse, that at the same moment their swords met in their father's body. He expired without a groan.

The noise of the body falling on the ground alarmed the attendants, whose habitual vigi-

lance was easily aroused. They rushed in; there was no outcry of inquiry or conjecture, for the parricides stood, frozen and senseless, still grasping their red dripping weapons. The body was raised and examined; but when they discovered it was stone dead, their faculties were restored, a wild burst of inarticulate horror rung through the apartment, and every one applied himself to a different purpose, with the precipitation of sudden, momentous discovery. The murderers were secured, unresisting and unconscious; every tower in the castle blazed with lights, and resounded with hurrying feet; the alarum bell rung out, quick, and loud, and terrible; the sound was heard at Naples the livelong night, wafted by the howlings of the storm. The family, whose inquiries were only answered by ghastly silence, rushed to the count's apartment. The daughters threw themselves in agony upon the body; the sons demanded the means and circumstances of the murder. The countess stood beside the couch to which the corse had been removed, and covered her face with her robe.

At this moment of distracted questions and incoherent answers, a number of the officials of justice arriving from Naples, entered the castle, and without disclosing the cause of their appearance, required that the criminals should be delivered into their custody. This was performed. The family had often turned, in the midst of their lamentations, with looks of appealing agony, to the brothers; but their voices were drowned in a fresh burst of woe, and they could not ask what probably had been asked in vain. The attendants, however, whose grief began to yield to wonder, interrogated the criminals repeatedly, on the motive and object of the dreadful deed they had done. They obtained no answer; the unhappy young men were once heard to ask for a little water, but from their fixed and bloodshot eyes, their staring hairs, and mute ghastliness, it was rightly conjectured that of what was passing around them they heard or noticed nothing.

In about an hour something like order was restored, and the criminals, of whose guilt, so obvious, there was scarce an official inquiry, were about to be removed, when the confessor rushed into the room. The attendants, who had beheld with calmness the terrible spectacle of a violent death, faltered and shrunk at the sight of him: there was nothing human to which he might be compared, nor anything beyond or below it that could be imagined like him. He flew with the speed of a demon to mischief; he paused as if he saw the desolation of the world. He gazed for a moment around him, and then approaching the officers, demanded that he should be secured by them, as the real agent of the crime of which they were appointed to take cognizance. The supernatural wildness of his aspect, contrasted with the calmness of his address, stupified the officers. They listened, to be assured that the sounds they heard proceeded from the object before them. He repeated them in a voice that chilled them; but while tremblingly they secured him, they almost expected to see the fetters with which they bound him disappear, or his whole form dissolved into vacancy. His demand, however, was incontrovertible; no one had accused, no one even had mentioned him; his surrender was voluntary, and no one inquired its reason.

The family now separated with the dumb solemnity that attends events too great for complaint. A few attendants, renewing the half-extinguished lights, prepared to watch by the body of their lord, over which was extended a black pall; and the carriages in which the officials had travelled conveyed them and their prisoners away about daylight.

The crime of the night, in all its circumstances, was so new and horrible, that even the ministers of justice, grown old in the history of human depravity, felt amazed and outraged by the event. Their attention was fixed strongly on the prisoners, as hunters would gaze on the motions of a monster, such as their search had never before discovered. The brothers were totally silent, and on their arrival at Naples were found to be plunged in a sleep so deep and heavy, that they were lifted out of the carriage by the attendants (who shuddered to touch them) without awaking. Schemoli kept his head enveloped in his cowl, through which his heart-drawn groans were every moment audible. On alighting from the carriage his face was involuntarily uncovered, and his eyes for a moment fell on the young men; and for that moment the expression of his visage was such that the attendants scarce thought themselves safe till it was concealed again. In consideration of their rank, they were allotted apartments in the Castle of St Elmo, where Schemoli immediately demanded implements for writing, a small portion of bread and water, and undisturbed solitude for thirty-six hours.

To this the officials, after examining the apartment, and removing from it every implement

of mischief, consented. He also demanded that no judicial steps should be taken against the prisoners till a document, which he was preparing, was ready to be submitted to the principal justiciary of Naples. With regard to this, he was informed that of a case so mysterious and extraordinary, no cognizance would probably be taken till a much more remote period, as the process of inquiry and examination which would be instituted, could not be too minute or deliberate. In consequence, however, of the intimations of the prisoner Schemoli, on the third night after his arrival at the Castle of St Elmo, the grand justiciaries of Naples, with some of its most distinguished public characters, at midnight assembled in a subterranean apartment of the castle. A double guard was planted on every avenue of the building, and the secretary advancing to the foot of the table, which was covered with black, while an assistant on each side held a torch, produced and read before the assembly a manuscript, given him a few hours before by the monk Schemoli, which he had written in his prison.

CHAPTER V.

"Let those who blame the extravagance of my passions think I was a lover; let those who mock my abused credulity reflect I was a jealous lover; let those who execrate the horrors of my revenge remember I was an Italian.

"I am Orazio, Count of Montorio, so long believed dead, and who rises from imaginary death only to bewail that it is not real. I am Orazio, Count of Montorio; this is no device of imposture; I have living witnesses and incontestible proofs. I have witnesses that can prove my identity, and a tale that must—I desire not to anticipate my narrative by a display of my character, it will be sufficiently unfolded by its progress, nor would I conceal its most dark and inward foldings from the eye. I have other purpose than my own vindication in this narrative.

"Of a large family, my brother, the late count, and I, alone arrived at the age of manhood.

"My heart had originally a capacity of affection beyond most human hearts. I loved him with a love "passing that of women;" I was alternately to him a father and a child, an almoner and a monitor. My purse he might have exhausted, my name he might have disgraced; but my heart———

"He was weak and vicious; I knew it well. It was the curse of my character to love, not for the perception or sake of worth in the object, but to gratify the wild exuberance of my own feelings. My heart was like a mine, that poured out its irresistible pregnancy of wealth at the feet of surrounding peasants, which enriched the worthless and exalted the base, whose unhappy fertility was without discrimination and without gratitude.

"I had procured my brother a military commission of high rank, which his irregularities soon compelled him to resign. Still I defended and upheld him, and gave to his retreat an air of angry dignity instead of disgrace. I was revolving some other plan for his advancement, and in order to pursue it, had removed to Naples, where I saw her whose name I cannot, on the verge of death, write with a firm hand, Erminia di Amaldi. I loved, as few men had ever loved, without knowledge of the passion, without knowledge of the sex. Of love or of marriage I had never even thought before; and now, as usual, my first thought was resolution. I addressed her without any gentleness of approach, any arts of insinuation. I persecuted her without any gradation of advance, any intervals of deliberation. If she had even loved me, I left her no time for its avowal, almost for its consciousness. I poured out my passion before her with a violence that affrighted her; and when she was terrified into silence I mistook it for assent. Her gentle reluctance, her timid distress, her silent dismay, nay, her tears and anguish, I heeded as much as the hunter pursuing his prey would heed the lily that he crushes in his speed.

"My impetuosity, my rank, my wealth, my munificence, bore down all obstruction. I led, I dragged Erminia to the altar, where, amid the solemnity, she fainted in my arms. After some time I brought her to my castle, surrounded her with everything that woman could desire, or man procure, and courted her to be happy with magnificence and affection.

"At this period my brother married, married without my consent, without my knowledge, a woman whose family had been the long-tried and inveterate enemy of mine; married with-

out the means of procuring his wife another meal, except from the compassion of that family, by whom, before I would be assisted, I would famish a thousand times. With sore constraint I assumed severity, and refused for some time to see or admit him.

"During this period I found other employment than thinking of him. I discovered, or imagined I had discovered, my wife did not love me. I feel now that I must have thought the same of any other woman. I had imagined that passion was a something which human performance could never realize. With the purity of a matron, and the delicacy of a woman, I yet expected the blandishments of a harlot, and the ardours of a man.

"To be what I demanded would probably have disgusted me; to be less, distracted me; I loved too well to be happy. Yet Erminia might have had more compassion, or might have dissembled more. Hours have I knelt at her feet, and have only been suffered to rise with a sigh. Hours have I held her to my heart, and felt only her cold tears trickling on my bosom. Hours have I supplicated for a smile, and been dismissed with one whose gleam played over her pale face like moonshine upon a plain of snow, cold and uncherishing. While she was pregnant, I tried to believe that indisposition might suspend her fondness, and when she became a mother, that her children might divide it. With the vigilance of jealousy, which dreads itself, though in her presence I heaped her with tender reproach and expostulation, yet, when absent, I studied, I invented devices to prevent my belief warping that way, while I tried to convince her what I dared not to think myself. Yes, Erminia might have had more compassion, or might have dissembled better.

"During this interval, having made my brother for some time experience the privation of his customary indulgences, I procured for him a distinguished situation, of which he concealed from me that he had anticipated the profits by debt, even before he had expected the possession of it. I had long been personally reconciled to him, and in the third year of my marriage he came to pass some time at the Castle of Muralto.

"(Here I dropped my pen, and my taper seemed to go out; it must be resumed; Erminia! Erminia! are these tears? Often have I poured out blood to thy memory, never till this hour a tear!)

"My brother easily discovered the state of my mind; a fool might have discovered it; concealment never was one of my habits. My mind was as open as the ocean, and as soon agitated by storms. I know not how his approaches were first made, with what poison his first invisible arrow was tinged, or rather with what depth of poison; for from the first it was the green, livid venom of jealousy he infused, from that shade which scarce produces an infected spot in the mind's eye, to that deep dye which darkens the sun, and overshadows the soul with glooms unlit and impassable. I think we were sitting one day after Erminia had quitted us; I observed her dejection in terms as cold as I could, merely to find if others thought of it as I did. 'When dejection,' said he, 'arises from a local cause, it is easily removed.'—'True,' said I, without applying the remark. 'There was a report,' he continued, 'that Almoni's regiment is ordered to embark for Spain, perhaps that occasions her dejection.'—'I never heard she had any relations in Almoni's regiment.'—'I never heard she had.'—'Why, then, should its removal affect her?'—'What! have you never heard of——?'—'What is it you mean?'—'Nothing, nothing in the world; a mistake—it must be all a mistake; let us send for the children, they are remarkably like you.'—'I think the elder is like me.'—'They are both like you,' said he, vehemently, 'by my soul they are! let people talk as they will.'

"The children came; I walked about, busied in a strife of thought; he observed it. 'Why do you not speak to the children?' said he.—'I had rather at this moment speak with you.' He came to the window against which I leaned my back, that he might not observe the changes I felt my features undergoing.'—'Why should the countess be disconcerted at the removal of the regiment of that—I know not his name?'—'I—I do not know.'—'You do know.'—'I only know what every one knows; why should I be interrogated?'—'What every one knows?'—'Yes; every one knows that the chevalier Verdoni has a company in that regiment.'—'And of what consequence is that to me, to the countess I mean?'—'What! have you never heard of Verdoni?'—'Never.'—'That is strange; never seen him at the Amaldi palace?'—'Never, I say. Oh, that there were no such things as questions and interjections upon this earth'—'I would there were no such things as questions at this moment. But now I recollect, it is not strange you never saw him at the Amaldi palace; he must have been dismissed.'—'Dismissed at my

approach?'—'Certainly; a rejected suitor; and every one recommended the countess's prudence. Women have a privilege of change in their latest period of courtship, and a woman of so much prudence must make a better wife. To keep such reports from you so long, she must have a great store indeed, and kindness too, for it is kind to prevent superfluous pain.'—'If you think so, why do you not finish your tale?'—'I finish it! I know nothing more. Would you have me repeat all the ribald talk of Naples, of my brother's wife too? If you have curiosity, or if you have patience, my servant Ascanio, who lived lately with Verdoni, can tell you what he heard. But let me entreat if you have not patience, do not call him.'

"He named a red-haired, ill-looking man, who attended him. I had a deep, untold aversion to that man; I started at his name. I said involuntarily—'I shall not like to listen to what Ascanio will tell me.'—'Very possibly you will not,' observed my brother, inwardly. 'Come, shall we go to the countess's apartment? I think I hear her harp.'—'Yes,' said I, almost unconsciously, 'let us go to—to my—to the countess.'—'I never heard you,' said he, carelessly, 'call her the countess so often as this evening; you used to say Erminia.'—'And she is Erminia,' said I, distracted by this hint; 'she is, she must be my Erminia.' I quitted the room; I thought I heard my brother laugh as we quitted it.

"Erminia was sitting at her harp, her children were at her feet, peeping at each other through the strings as she sung to them. I tried to listen, but every tone of voice or harp murmured 'Verdoni.' I beckoned to my brother, and we quitted the apartment.

"'Send for your servant,' said I, when we were alone. 'For what?'—'I shall tell him when he comes.'—'You must tell me before he is sent for.'—'Must!'—'Yes; and moreover you must promise, when he comes, to listen to him calmly.'—'By mentioning that condition, it is plain you know for what purpose I would send for him.'—'And by seeming to decline that condition, it is plain you expect he will disclose something it is not safe for you to hear.'—'I shall begin to expect it, if you do not call him immediately.'—'That apprehension alone makes me submit.'—(Precious devil!)—'I trust he will disclose nothing so bad as you expect.'—'Oh, go for him, go for him!' said I, writhing with impatience; 'while you talk I am mad.' He went; Ascanio was not to be found. This was a master-stroke. I was left a whole night to think; both of them pouring their suggestions into every avenue of my heart, for the same number of hours, could not have effected so much as solitude and the workings of my own thought effected. In the morning Ascanio was again summoned. I locked the apartment on him, my brother, and myself. I will not detail his serpent-windings, or his worse than serpent-sting. He affected that perplexity which endeavours to conceal a secret whenever I questioned him, and that terror which is conscious of guilt; when I grew impatient, he affected a concern for the disclosures he reluctantly made; he affected to be a character, of all others the most imposing—the honest, indignant, involuntary confidant of vice. The sum of his tale was, that Verdoni had long been attached to the countess; that, in consequence of his attachment, he was indulged with an intimacy, which he had abused; that it was known they had a child, though how it was disposed of was not known; that he had been banished from the family, whose indiscretion had published their misfortune; that their lawless passion still continued, and was still gratified; and that the countess's dejection arose more from the interruption, than the disappointment of her guilty love.

"I listened to this, all told with the wildest breaks of fear and remorse; I listened with that distraction which does not lose a syllable. Expletive and letter, and look and nod, was written on my heart with a pen of iron. The characters are uneffaced—I could read them to this hour; but to this hour its own evil is sufficient. Ascanio was dismissed, and my brother sat silent, with the aspect of one who has reluctantly betrayed a secret; at length he murmured something about inquiry and deliberation. 'I am deliberating,' said I, scarce hearing myself. 'Ogni Santi!' said he, 'what are you doing?'—'I believe—am I not mending a pen?'—'Mending a pen!—mangling your flesh; it is your finger you are cutting,' said he, snatching the knife from me. I saw my fingers flowing with blood—I looked on them and laughed.

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"I cannot, I will not follow the gradations of my ruin, I will not throw aside the covering under which my mental wounds have festered so long, to count their number, or probe their depth, or thaw by frequent touch the poison that has almost congealed in them, the blood that has ceased to flow. I was desired to observe my wife more closely; for I was told, that

at night, when she believed I slept, she indulged a luxury of sorrow and passion, in which she was even heard to call on the name of her paramour. I needed no suggestions to bid me wake; but, on the night after I received the intimation, I counterfeited sleep as soon as I lay down.

"In a short time she began to sigh heavily; it was a sultry summer night, and she was far advanced in her pregnancy. I ascribed her depression to an obvious cause, and, with the natural inconsistency of him who watches to discover what he would die to prove false, I wished that some heavy spell would steep me in drowsiness before I discovered her sighs had another source. In a short time she arose, and wrapping a loose robe around her, took one of the tapers that burned in a veiled niche, and walked to a cabinet, of which I had often observed her care to be excessive. Through my half-closed lids I watched her every motion; she placed the taper on a marble desk, which sometimes she used as an oratory, and on which stood a crucifix. She opened the cabinet, and after examining some papers, she took out a parcel, which she laid before her, and began to read. My heart throbbed audibly. As she bent over the paper, I thought a tear fell on it.—'Would she,' said I, mentally, 'weep over the guilty passion of her paramour, under the very crucifix to which I have seen her prostrate herself an hour ago?'

"She put up the papers, and turning from the desk, leaned on the cabinet, The moon shone bright, and the lattice, woven with jessamine and tuberose, was open; she turned towards it. Mother of God, how lovely she looked! the taper tinged the summits of her feathery and burnished hair with a radiance resembling that which hovers round the head of a saint; the moonlight fell on her pale face, disclosing, just in the centre of her cheek, a flushing spot, such as no adoration from me had ever kindled; her loose robe half disclosed a shape, of all others the most interesting to a husband. She murmured a few broken notes of an air I had often heard her lull her infants to rest with. Every sense might have been feasted by the picture before me; but along with the odour of the jasmine came the perfume of those fatal letters.

"I noted this well; I remembered that lovers, in voluptuous gallantry, often perfumed their letters. As I gazed on her, a tear glittered in the moonshine; it was followed by another, and another; and the last was accompanied by the murmured name of 'Verdoni.' I groaned audibly; she started. She replaced the letters and the taper, and approached the bed: 'Are you awake, my lord?'—'I fear I am almost awake.'—'You fear!'—'Oh yes; it was so sweet to dream as I have done!'—'Were your dreams so pleasant? I thought I heard you groan.'—'I groaned when I found you had left me.'—'Left you!'—'Yes, even in sleep I felt it; sleeping or waking, I think only of you (she was standing beside the bed; I knelt up in it: I grasped both her hands); my senses, my soul are full of you! Erminia, I adore you so, with such nice and exquisite fondness as you can never imagine! You can never love as I do! but, though you must ever be comparatively deficient, beware, I adjure you, of being positively so; a dereliction of thought, an imagined desertion, would drive me mad.' I was pouring out my whole heart, with all its habitual impetuosity, at the very moment I had proposed to myself vigilance and caution.

"I was still holding her hands; she sunk into a chair beside the bed, but without withdrawing them. I sprung from the bed, and knelt at her feet. Her head was declined, with the pale, pensive, lily-bending that always melted me to sorrow and love. I continued to gaze on her without speaking; my voice was lost. 'Hear me, my lord——' 'Hear me, my lady, and my love and life! I throw myself on your mercy; I implore your compassion for you and for myself. Do you remember the antique gem I gave you the other day? you admired the workmanship much, too much; more than the gift, I fear! But I am wandering; you remember the device—Cupid drawn by a lion, who paces quietly in his silken harness; think of me thus, dear, blessed love! use me thus. While I am led by love, its caged emblems will not be so tender or so tame; but set free from that, I am a lion indeed; a lion who will—— oh, Erminia, save me from imagining what!'

"I dashed myself at her feet; I wept; I raved; my violence produced its usual effects; she was terrified and fainted. Her attendants were summoned. As I bent over her, extended in the likeness of death, I breathed an inward vow to banish for ever from my mind the subject of our conference, of which I already felt the misery insupportable, though the

truth was not yet ascertained. I determined to sit down with the sufferings I could not now recall, and content with that happiness I might yet believe within my reach.

"When they demanded of me the next morning what had been the event of my observations, I started as if I heard a serpent hiss; I prohibited all future mention of the subject. They quitted the apartment in silence; but Ascanio, as he was going out, dropped a small key. I did not dare to think what this might mean; my first impulse was to seize it, and try it where I expected it was to be applied. I collected myself, and again called Ascanio. 'You have dropped a key.' He sprung forward to seize it with the aspect of one who curses his own carelessness.

"Here I might have rested, and suffered him to depart, with the shame of defeated villainy; but my curiosity, my—the devil within me was roused. 'Does that key guard a treasure, that you snatch it with such eagerness?'—'I do not know, my lord.'—'You do not know what your own key secures?'—'My lord, the key is not mine.'—'Not yours! whose is it then?'—'It belonged to my late master, the Chevalier Verdoni. He made no use of it himself; he kept it as a relic, he said; it was a key belonging to a cabinet he had presented to a lady he loved.'

"I drove him from the room. In the confusion of his fear he again dropped the key. I seized it. I flew to Erminia's room; he was in the gardens of the castle, with her children and attendants. I locked the door. To have seen my feverish tremblings, any one would have believed I was hastening to some feast of solitary delight, and at that moment I would have changed situations with him that was writhing on the rack. One hope remained; that the key was not designed for that cabinet. I tried it. Alas! it was only the trembling of my hands that made it seem to resist. I opened; a mist overspread my sight. A gentle knock at the door aroused me; it was my eldest boy. 'You cannot come in, my darling!'—'Why, father?'—'Because I am busy.'—'I know, from the sound of your voice, you are not praying, father; and why may I not come in?' I could not answer. 'Tell me what are you doing?'—'I do not know what I am doing,' said I, in agony. 'Whatever it be, throw it away, if it prevents you from coming to the garden, and playing with us.' He tripped lightly away. I heard every word; the responses of an oracle had not sunk so deep into my soul. 'Throw it away!' The fatal papers were yet unopened. As I turned them, with a shaking hand, they fell; I stooped to replace them, and when my eye glanced on the first line, I could not withdraw it till I read to the last.

"When I had done, sense and memory forsook me. I know not where my spirit went for some time; but, though it seemed the very haunt of final woe, it was paradise to its return to consciousness. All was mist and cloud for some time, such as the soul struggles through, breathless and fancy-bound, in some hag-ridden dream. I saw the walls of the apartment, but I knew not where I was; I heard bells, and steps, and voices; but I knew not where I was; I heard the voice of the countess in the gallery, and then I knew where and what I was.

"My despair was not easily concealed; even my domestics, I believe, observed it. In a short time, however, I became invisible to all but my brother and his servant; them only I admitted, yet them I could not bear to behold.

"I am convinced I felt at the sight of that devil, Ascanio, what a sorcerer feels in the presence of an imp whose ministry he employs, but by whom he knows he will be finally plunged in woe. His intelligence and his observation seemed necessary to existence, while they consumed it. I lived on poison. I was like the criminal travelling in the livid shape of the upas, who must feed to live, and if he feeds must die. I had no feelings for this man but hatred and malevolence. I never saw him but my throat swelled, and my eyes seemed scalding in their sockets; yet I fastened on him for my morbid food, and devoured it with the greediness with which one would swallow the promises of hope and fortune.

"I mentioned to my brother the confessions of the guilty letters. I was astonished to perceive that he listened to the disclosure like one whose feelings were pre-occupied by some darker discovery. I remarked it with that quickness that met half-way all the devices employed against me. He shook his head. urged my suspicions with vehemence. 'If,' said he, 'I could have any security that you would be patient, though, after what I have seen of you, I have no reason to accuse your want of patience.' I urged him frantically to proceed. 'What I have formerly disclosed,' said he, 'was accidentally and reluctantly: but I now speak from

conscience and a sense of duty. Whatever errors a woman is guilty of before marriage, it is to be hoped the generous affection of a husband will lead her to shame and repentance of; but when she persists in her deviations after, she ceases to be an object of compassion or pardon.' He stopped. I waved my hand to him to proceed; I had no voice. 'I have already said everything,' said he. Again I motioned him to go on, though I could no longer distinguish sounds. 'I have no more to say,' said he, after a long pause. 'And I have no more to think,' said I. 'Have you, then, resolved on anything?'—'Yes, I have, if I could tell it; but I have no words, they have all left me.'—'I know your purposes.'—'No, by my soul you do not; you are thinking of blood and horror; I take no thought of them. For him, for him, were I master of the sulphurous lake, I would give up all minor tasks to minor imps to watch him tossing and weltering on its waves for ever and ever. For her, who has no name, let her live in what peace she may; my blood, and that of her paramour, shall be on her head; but I could not shed a drop of hers, not if I might be lapped in a dream of love again for it.'—'And will you, then, suffer her to escape?'—'When she is delivered of the child, which I believe is mine, she shall be removed to a convent, and may the saints visit her retreat with penitence, for then will be done things that shall be a tale for ages; no, not one of those who have wrought me to this destruction shall escape.' As I uttered the last words I thought I saw him grow pale. My mind was full of dark thoughts; I seized his arm; I looked eagerly in his face—'Swear,' said I, 'that what you have told me is true.' He kissed a missal that lay on the table. I saw, I heard him.

"'Now swear that you have perjured yourself.'—'Are you mad?'—'I am, I will be in a moment, unless you do; I cannot bear it.' I know not what followed; I was for some hours in a state from which alone I have since derived pauses of relief. When I recovered I felt I had a human heart no longer; the images of affection, and wife and child, seemed to strike on my heart with palpable impulse, and find no entrance there; there was no longer admission or inmate there; the lamp was gone out, and the door shut for ever. The first sensation I was conscious of was an unquenchable thirst. I swallowed draught after draught, and thirsted still; it was mental and inward; nothing could slake it but a thought which, while it relieved for a moment, made it more fierce and stinging; it was the blood of Verdoni in a vase before me. My brother, sometimes deprecating my violence, and sometimes bewailing his task, at length informed me that the guilty intercourse of Erminia and Verdoni still continued, unchecked by fear, or by the suspicions which my altered demeanour might have suggested to them.

"I know not how I answered him. I permitted him to arrange everything for their detection and punishment. I was in his hands as passive as a tool, but I never relaxed my demand of being suffered to dispatch Verdoni alone.

"My brother announced that I was about making a tour to the Grecian islands. I was accompanied by some attendants as far as the shore; there I dismissed them; and hiring, under an assumed name, a small villa in the neighbourhood of Baiæ, awaited the intelligence my brother engaged to send me. That came too soon. Ascanio brought me volumes of intercepted letters, referring to interviews and indulgences stolen in my absence. Their frequent meetings, their visits to their child, their remarks on its increasing growth and beauty, every doubtful term in the letters of the cabinet repeated and confirmed, occurred in these intercepted scrolls. When perused, their effect on me was usually a paroxysm so dreadful, that the people of the house were scarcely pacified by the assurances they received of my periodical insanity; these paroxysms were followed by hours of solitude and abstraction, during which I could tolerate the presence of no one, and none dared to approach me. It was during these moments that strange thoughts were with me. My spirits fell like a subsiding tide, and like a falling tide carried away with them the dregs and wreck of his spent fury. I had relinquished every circumstance and pretension of rank and eminence. I had become a private man in habit and exterior; all the vanity of the earth was become tasteless and loathsome to me; I sickened at their hollowness, I spurned their incapacity to suspend or alleviate calamity. I execrated the celebrity that made their possessor's fall only more conspicuous, his misfortunes a more popular theme of vulgar curiosity, his degradation a more ample feast for the vultures *of envy.* I felt that to return to what I had been was impossible—that my outward man must *partake of the change of* my inward man—that I could no longer support the Count Montorio's

name, when I no longer possessed the Count Montorio's mind. I cannot describe the process or the effect of this change, so great and effectual, though I experience its consequences to this hour.

" I was a bold, ambitious, vain man, proud of my rank, and fond of its pompous appendages; what I became suddenly and finally, my narrative will tell. I have compared my progress to that of a magnificent caravan, overwhelmed and blasted in the majesty of its march by the burning deluge of the desert, and fixed a monument of desolation, where it had moved a monument of pride. The result of my meditations was anticipated by a letter from Muralto, where my brother still resided as a spy on the culprits. He told me that their passion raged with such shameless violence that Verdoni was frequently introduced at the castle and that he had even fixed on a night to spend there, which the countess had confessed and implored him to conceal, believing, from the frequency of her lover's visits, that it was no longer possible to dissemble their object. When I read this—

" I need not go on, nor will I enumerate every link of the chain that they wound round me with the art of demons, every one of burning iron, that scorched without consuming. I will mention, however, one circumstance, which is but too strongly indicative of my character, of that part of it which is derived from hereditary propensity. I think I can recollect the impressions they intended to produce were unsettled, till they introduced a wretch, a mendicant, an astrologer, who talked something about prediction, and horoscopes, and ascendants, and a trinal aspect on some hour on the appointed evening. He was a meagre, illiterate wretch; I would have spurned my lackey for listening to him, yet I listened to him. I was like a sufferer bit by the tarantulla; though my veins were filled with poison, they bounded and vibrated to his muttering jargon.

" The night arrived. If any being could be supposed enveloped in lightning without being consumed, and then dismissed without losing the faculties and functions of life, such, I believe, would he describe the moment of his existence in the fiery fluid to be, as I remember the events of that night, thus sudden, thus hot, thus blasting! gone almost when felt, without a possibility of defining or forgetting the time of its agency a moment, of its effects for ever.

" At the close of that evening I quitted my habitation, and met my brother in a forest that skirted the Campagna, about two miles from Muralto, whose towers I could yet see through the dusk. He did not speak, and I believed all he had told me was true. We rode into a thicket, where we alighted and secured our horses. In a few moments I heard the trampling of hoofs. A cavalier passed alone, his deportment was melancholy and his pace slow. He passed us; my brother made a signal that we should again mount our horses—we did so. At some distance I saw him enter a cottage in the forest; I saw him at the door caressing a child, whom he placed before him and disappeared in the windings of the wood. 'Adulterous villain!' said my brother. I did not speak; all was mist and darkness with me. I followed my brother's motions mechanically. We entered the cottage, there was only a woman within. I leaned against the door; I could not breathe the air he had poisoned. My brother passed before me to prevent her being alarmed at my appearance; it was probably most terrific. 'Who is the cavalier that has just quitted your cottage?'—'May I ask who inquires, signor?'—'We are friends, and have important business with him, if we are right in our conjectures of his name——'—'Why, signor, he calls himself Orsanio,' said the woman, proud of her sagacity; 'but I myself have heard his attendants address him by the name of Verdoni.'—'He visits your cottage frequently?'—'Oh, frequently, signor! He has a beautiful babe here, whom he cannot live a day without seeing.'—'And is he always unaccompanied?'—'Oh no, signor: he is often met here by a lady in a veil, and they converse and weep over the child till they make me weep too, though I know not for what.'—'Do you know from whence the lady comes?'—'She leaves her carriage at the skirts of the wood, signor; but I have heard it said that she is seen to return to the castle of Muralto, whose towers you can just see through the twilight. There are strange things told of the possessors of that great castle. Hark, signor! could that groan have been uttered by the cavalier who leans there?'—'No, no; proceed, proceed.'

" All this I heard; but after the last sentence I heard nothing. We quitted the cottage; we mounted our horses. 'What do you purpose to do?' said my brother. I could make no answer but showing my drawn stiletto, and pointing towards the castle. We rushed

into the wood; I did not see we were joined by Ascanio till he pointed out Verdoni at a little distance before us. I sprung forward; he attempted to defend himself, and believing us, from our masks and arms, to be assassins, implored us to save his child. I dashed the bastard to the ground. He drew; but by this time the others had come up, and Ascanio, with a blow, lopped off the hand that held the sword. Possibly he saved my life, for I was so blind and impotent with fury, he might have overcome me with a reed. But I had no wish to mangle or butcher; I would not touch a hair of his head. I seized the reins of his horse, and we galloped towards the castle. They asked what I purported, but I could only utter, 'My wife!'

"There are many private avenues which, winding beneath the ramparts, open on the wood; they were unknown except to me, for none but an enthusiast in antiquity would explore them. They followed me, therefore, as they would a magician, who discloses a path among subterranean rocks. I remembered their windings well, and remembered that one of them terminated in a dark and secret stair, that communicated with the apartments of my wife. We traversed those caverns with no light but what broke through chasm or crevice above, with no sound but the inarticulate moans of the devoted Verdoni.

"I will not interrupt this narrative with attempts to describe what men call their feelings, for such as mine there can be but little sympathy, for there is no knowledge. Few have been in my circumstances—none that ever I knew have had my mind. It is easy to tell of the fall of ambition and the loss of felicity, but who has dared to describe the state of Lucifer, the 'son of the morning,' when he fell from the sphere of a seraph, and the harmonies of heaven, into darkness and woe, into beds of fire and fetters of adamant! Such was mine, total, remediless, final; worse; none but a mortal can know the hell of love.

"I left our victim at the foot of the staircase with my brother; I ascended to the countess's apartment, I traversed one in which the children were sleeping, I could not look at them. Their mother was in her bedchamber, her nurse was her only attendant. She screamed when she saw me; I attempted some insulting words, but my voice was choked. I believe in a moment she comprehended the whole of her danger; she must, for my visage was the visage of a demon, and though I had not the power of language, my voice was like the roar of ocean. 'Oh, I am betrayed and undone!' said she, staggering back and falling on the bed. Then I found words. Words! firebrands, and arrows, and death I hurled at her in my rage of malediction. The woman interposed—affrighted, interposed. I spurned her away. Darkly I menaced something that seemed to sting her to apprehension. She sprung from the bed, she clung to my feet, she wept, she grovelled, she adjured me but to hear her—to hear her—'Let me but be heard!' I saw, I felt, I feasted on the anguish of her soul! every arrow she had sent into my heart was returned to hers, barbed with poison. 'I am innocent, by this light!'—'Adulteress!'—'By this blessed cross I kiss——'—'Adulteress! adulteress!' I roared. 'Hear me but for a moment! confront me with your brother. Oh, Verdoni! we are destroyed by treachery!'

"I tried to force myself from her; she clung to me still. I dragged her along the ground; her shrieks were wild, her grasp was like the grasp of death. 'Oh, but for a moment hear me! Is that so much? As you expect to be heard yourself when you are stretched on the bed of death!' Suddenly I stopped. I fixed my dry and bursting eyes on her; I felt the unnatural and hushed stillness of my voice. 'I will not be heard myself in the hour of death! I have no hope, you have bereft me of it—you have undone me for ever! The horrors and burden of this night are on my soul through you, and of you they shall be required! Ho, Ascanio! drag that adulterous villain here—his mistress is ready for her paramour.' She started from her knees, she fixed her eyes on the door by which I entered; she saw——

* * * * * *

"I must go on. They talk of the vengeance of Italian husbands, mine outgoes example. I caused him to be deliberately stabbed before her sight!

"I paused between every blow! I bid her listen to every groan! Poor, distracted wretch! she thought the ravings of her love would disarm, instead of nerving my blows. When she found her shrieking supplications for 'mercy! mercy! mercy!' were vain, she became *wilder than myself.* With the frenzy of a lover, she reeled up and down, blind and breathless,

echoing the faint cries of Verdoni, and cursing his murderers, whom she had a moment before knelt to. 'Devils! devils!' she shrieked, 'I do not pray, I do not kneel now; stab on! Oh, that my eyes would burst!' Verdoni's last blood-stifled groan came to her ear. 'Ah, that groan was ease!' she screamed. 'He is dead! Ha, ha, ha! I laugh at ye now; he is dead, he is dead!'

"Staggering, she sunk upon the body. Her heart burst! When I touched her, she was cold as a stone; her eyes fixed, but lifeless; her limbs relaxed, her pulses extinct. When I found she was dead, gone without recall for ever, that Erminia was dead——But I have no power to speak of that hour. I sprung forward with the speed of one who flies from destruction; destruction did indeed surround me on every side; and it was owing to this unexpected direction my passions took, and the inconceivable velocity with which I perceived it, that I escaped for that night at least. I must have flown with the speed of a cloud chased by the storm; for I was many miles along the western shores of Naples by midnight. My horse, whom I had found in the wood, then sunk under me. I flew on foot, traversing the windings of the shore like a wave. My reason was not suspended, it was totally changed. I had become a kind of intellectual savage; a being that, with the malignity and depravation of inferior natures, still retains the reason of a man, and retains it only for his curse. Oh! that midnight darkness of the soul, in which it seeks for something whose loss has carried away every sense but one of utter and desolate privation; in which it traverses leagues in motion, and worlds in thought, without consciousness of relief, yet with a dread of pausing. I had nothing to seek, nothing to recover; the whole world could not restore me an atom, could not show me again a glimpse of what I had been, or lost; yet I rushed on as if the next step would reach shelter and peace. My flight was so wild and rapid, that it was equally impossible to calculate its direction, or overtake its speed. I had disappeared while they were removing the corses and the traces of blood. Other causes might have contributed to my escape; there was a storm, they said, a commotion both of air and earth. I recollect nothing of it but the report; but it probably deterred those who were not desperate like me.

"Towards morning I sprung into a small bark; it was going to Sicily; but Sicily I soon quitted, and crossed into the Grecian isles. I had an inveterate loathing, not of the human form, but of the human form under an Italian garb; aye, of the houses and trees, the language and the very air; whatever I had formerly resembled, or been conversant with, was an abomination to me. I looked upon them as a condemned spirit may be supposed to look on the body in which he had sinned; now dark, deserted, and loathsome; at once the remembrancer of pleasure and the incendiary of pain. It is remarkable that during this term I adopted, in desperation, the very course that the most active and suspicious caution would have deliberately pursued. My frequent changes of residence, my private haunts, my solitude, and my disguise, preserved me from discovery as effectually as if they had been intentional, or even conscious.

"I rambled from isle to isle, from sand to rock, without notice, and without interruption. The people were poor and simple—they had no leisure for curiosity; my appearance terrified them, and they were glad when it was removed; my miserable food was easily procured; my clothes were now ragged, and my bed the bare earth. This was a brother's doing! Still I wandered on, for there was something I wanted: that something was utter solitude, a total amputation from life. I had heard of a little barren islet, which was dreaded as the haunt of a spirit of wrecks and storms: I rowed myself thither in a boat one still night. Whether it was the residence of such a being, I cared not; it was enough for me no human being ventured there. Here I found all I needed, a cave, water, wild fruits, and during winter more provisions than I could consume, left on the shore by the superstitious people, to propitiate the turbid spirit of the place.

"Here I sunk into a strange kind of animal life; I became quite a creature of the elements: my propensities and habits ceased to be those of humanity, of social humanity at least. I lost the use of language; I forgot my own name; yet my time was sufficiently diversified by the changes of the season and the sky. When it was tempestuous, I rushed abroad, I howled and shrieked with the voices of the storm. I bared my pelted head and breast to the rain, and when cold and drenched, retired to my cave and slept. When it was calm, I sat on a crag of my cave and listened to the winds, whose wild and changeful moanings were wrought by the diversities of *the shore into a quaint mimicry* of human sounds—to the tide, whose lambent

ripplings I felt, as well as heard, breathing tranquillity. I never thought of my former self, or of those with whom I had been; I was conscious of something like a dark recess in my thoughts, from which I seemed to have emerged lately, and into which I did not wish to venture again. Sometimes I dreamed; but my faculties were so confused, that I only remembered my dream as something obscurely painful, something that interrupted that quiet exile from consciousness and thought, that seemed to be the *menstruum* of my present existence. I believe I might have lingered out many years in this state, on the principle of the longevity of idiots.

"One evening, as I sat on the sea-shore, I saw a boat at a small distance, which floated along its winding, as if rather to observe than to land. I lifted my heavy and stagnated eyes; but when I saw the Italian habits in the boat, I flew to hide myself in my cave, shaking with horror. I did not venture out again till it was dark; there were stars, but no moon: it was owing to this, and to the silent tread of my naked feet, that I approached unseen, where two men were seated on a point of rock conferring. The Italian language came to my ear; I listened with a blind and mechanical delight at first. I loved the sound (so wild are the inconsistencies of the human mind), though at first the words were unintelligible. I was quickly awakened by their full meaning.—'You are a bold and daring devil, Ascanio,' said one.—'Yes, I was once, but I am almost spoiled for these feats now. Could I think I might hope for absolution, I would turn penitent, ay, monk, and pray for the remainder of my days. The murder of the unfortunate cavalier and lady, who were as innocent as those blessed lights above, and the persecution of the wretched mad count to this desolate and savage life; nor even to let him rest in his den, to shed his blood on these wild sands—by all the saints I wonder this rock supports us!'—'Away, fool! half the convents in Italy might be bribed with a moiety of the ducats we shall get for it.'

"There was much more; I listened for an hour; they talked as without witness, as two murderers, solitary and undisguised. Erminia, the unfortunate lady, and the cavalier, innocent! and the wretched mad count, persecuted to desperation and murder by his brother, and then by his brother traced to solitude and slaughtered in his den!

"Oh!—but I cannot, cannot; if I should but write her name, I shall write on for unnoted days and nights volumes filled only with her name—late and impotent repentance, and cries of posthumous despair!

"I will pursue my narrative. I retreated to my cave with an instinctive provision for safety; yet when I came there, I could neither devise nor employ a weapon if I had it. I fell on my bed of leaves, and awaited death. I saw a shadow darkening the entrance of my hut; one of them crept in as he would into the den of a savage, whom he feared to rouse by noise or light. I had no power of motion; by a strange but lucky infatuation, I felt as if I was compelled to await the approach of my murderer. He drew near; in the darkness of my cave I could no longer see his steps, but I felt them; so dark was the nook in which I lay, that I felt his breath on my face, but could not see him. With an impulse, whose quickness prevented escape or resistance, I sprung up; the part I fastened on darkling was his throat. I threw him to the ground; my strength, naturally great, was rendered gigantic by my habits of hardihood and difficulty.

"I felt him gasp and quiver with the motions of death; I felt his vest for his stiletto—it was stuck in his belt unsheathed. I drew it out, and with steps that did not rouse the bat from its cleft, stole to the entrance of the cave. The other was bending over a crag that fenced it; I sprung on him when he expected his associate: he started, and beheld a form scarce human holding a dagger to his throat.

"He flew with the swiftness of fear, and I with the swiftness of revenge; delighted I perceived him toiling up a rock, which, isolated and bare, beetled over the sea, cutting off all retreat. He looked, and leaped; I bent over the ridge, and beheld him struggling in the waters. I returned to my cave; the body that lay there was black, and swollen, and stark. I did not lie in my cave that night; I vented my rage and anguish along the shores, in sounds as wild as the winds that swept them—sounds that I sometimes thought were echoed by wailing cries from the rock where I had compelled Ascanio to plunge into the dark and pitiless waters. *Towards morning* I searched the corse in the cave; I found letters principally from my brother *and his wife to the* bearer, who was a public assassin, and his brother Ascanio. * *

I was at first about to describe the effects of their perusal; but I feel I must not. I have a task to do, for which all that remains to me of intellect is necessary. Why should I waste it in sallies of voluntary frenzy? It is enough for me to detail the contents of these letters. I will do it most calmly and unshrinkingly. * * * * *

"It appeared that my brother had been the former lover of my wife; that his own marriage had been a match of angry disappointment, which, fermented by his wife's ambition had suggested to him the idea of working on my credulous and vindictive disposition; and——I will go on calmly and unshrinkingly. He had planted spies about the family of Amaldi, and he had suborned a depraved servant whom Verdoni had dismissed. The secret sorrows that so visibly clouded the house of Amaldi were quickly known. Erminia had in her earliest youth been attached to Verdoni; her father, with common worldliness of character, hesitated, in the hope of a splendid suitor. But his cold policy was spurned by the lovers; they were united privately in the church of St Antonio on the night of the 4th December 1667, and the following winter Erminia was delivered of an infant daughter, at the house of a relative not far from Naples. About this time Verdoni's regiment was stationed in the neighbourhood of Palermo, where a powerful banditti terrfied and oppressed the country. The inhabitants requested the aid of military force—Verdoni's company marched against the banditti, but, misled in the windings of a forest, were assailed by an ambuscade, and cut off to a man. The names of the officers who had perished were sent to Naples, and the first among them was that of Verdoni. Erminia's marriage had not been at this time avowed, and there was now no necessity for its avowal. She wept over her fatherless babe in solitude. At this moment my disastrous proposals were urged. Wounded and shocked, Erminia appealed to her father; she told him her tale. She was answered by a command to marry the Count Montorio, on pain of paternal malediction. She was told of the folly of sacrificing her youth and hopes to the cherishing of a widowed name, and of the wickedness of preferring duty to a dead husband to a living father. She wept, she trembled, and she obeyed. Oh! she was all gentleness, all melting, pliant, weeping woman! She impure! She was formed of thrice fanned snow, tempered with dew from the cup of the lily of the vale, and animated by some spirit who had bathed in the cold blood of spheral light; she that should have been nested in my bosom, and fed with kisses like the suckling of my heart, she——I have vowed to write her name no more.

"Shortly after our fatal marriage, her husband, who had been taken prisoner by the banditti, and confined in a subterranean cavern, after a perilous and strange emersion into light, returned to Italy. He returned in disguise, for he dreaded the pursuit of those from whom he had escaped. He returned, and found his wife the wife of another man, and the mother of other children! No one dared to tell of his return to her, still less was it probable her family would disclose their shame to me, a shame their own selfish haste had incurred. She was wandering one evening in the woods with her own attendant: a voice called on her—she was retreating in affright; again it called, a well-known voice of reproach and love. The next moment the lovers wept in agony on each other. To meet him often, to weep with him over the child of their sorrows, who could envy her this last sad consolation? It was at this moment that my brother, prompted by his Tullia of a wife (for mere man was incapable of it), determined to possess himself of rank and wealth, without the doubtful and suspected means of poniard or poison. He knew neither of them could go more swiftly or silently to the seat of life than the infamy of the wife I adored, or the diminution of the honour I was an enthusiast in. He was safe, besides, for no one would venture to tell me that my wife was the wife of another, nor, even if they suspected I knew it, would they presume to comment on it. I was therefore shut up to the mercy of these two men, who had not kindness enough to stab me to the heart. The letters I had found in the cabinet had been written during the period of their wedded separation at Naples. Every expression of luscious and intimate tenderness occurred in them; but from a necessary caution, all allusions to their real situation (which would have undeceived me) were suppressed, lest they should be discovered by her father. During my absence, my abused wife had intrusted her honour and her sufferings to my brother. She had informed him that Verdoni was about to quit Italy for ever; and that she proposed, after her confinement, to retire into a convent, and assume the veil. My murdered love! amid the anguish of passion her thoughts were holy as *vestal dreams! She acknowledged* my affection, she avowed her gratitude to me, the

implored him to soothe my disappointments in pride and in passion—mine, who was planning her murder!

"In the dark hour of solitary woe, thus she leant on him, and thus he betrayed her! Oh! why did her fatal, fatal wish to spare my feelings prevent her making the disclosure herself? My suffering would have been indeed great, but my triumph would have been great also. I would have resigned her to her first love, to the husband of her youth; resigned her without a groan, though my last had followed the sacrifice when they had left me alone. I would—— but I am to tell not what I would have been, but what I am. In other parts of the letters I found they had resolved on a total massacre that night—that we were to have fallen by each other. Two victims had indeed fallen; but I, as I have related, had escaped by an unexpected impulse of flight, to which I yielded in the madness of the moment, without thought of safety or of danger, and which the confusion of murder had prevented them from noticing till I was many miles from Muralto.

"Since that period, which was about three years, Ascanio and his brother had pursued me through Italy; they had pursued every track and shadow of intelligence, with the hot and breathless diligence of a chace of blood; while my brother, trembling in his castle, spread a report of my death, and celebrated my funeral rites in the chapel of the family. They had at length discovered me, and their charge was death, without noise and without delay. Such was the intelligence of these letters, scattered up and down, conveyed in hint and reference, confident and familiar.

"When I was perusing them, there was but one nerve in my heart whose motion was restless and inquiring, all the rest seemed seared and rivetted. I read on with an agitation which was the last alarm of nature—my children! I read on—they were dead!

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"When I had read all, a fire seemed to spring up within me; a dark, solid, unconsuming fire, that preyed without destroying. I know not how to describe my sufferings (for I always suffered in solitude; there was no voice of inquiry near me, no shadow; no friend to fling refreshment on my cold bed of leaves); but surely never were spirit and body so strangely acted on by each other. The fire I speak of seemed to me corporal and visible. I remember sitting on a point of rock, and wondering it did not smoke and crumble beneath me; I seemed to live in fire. My muscles and nerves, swoln and rigid with agony, were like rods of red hot metal; my hairs hissed and sparkled with the flickering of flame when the wind moved them; and my eyes, their sockets seemed glowing iron; and when I closed them, long tresses of dancing fire floated from them, and they seemed to turn on an inward world of flames, on which they gazed with the anguish, but not the short duration, that the rage of the elements permits.

"I know not how long I was in this state: I had no mark of time but day and night, and to them I had been often insensible, except that I think I was conscious of greater pain from the glare of the day. When I had recovered, Erminia and Verdona were beside me; never for a moment since have I been insensible of their presence. They have been at different times my punishment and my consolation, my taskers and my companions. Four years in my rocky solitude I conferred with them alone, sometimes tranced by their whispers, and sometimes harrowed by their shrieks. I speak with the earnestness and simplicity of one who, convinced of what he speaks, is careless of being believed by others. The dreams of the night are easily dissolved, and strange shapes are sometimes seen to skimmer through the twilight of a cavern; but I have met them at noon on the bare sunny shore. I have seen them on the distant wave when its bed was smooth and bright as jasper; the curtained mist that hung on mole and breaker, and mingled with the sheeted spanglings of the surf floated back from them, did not throw a fringe of its shadowy mantling on their forms. I could not be deceived. Sometimes the light was glorious beyond imagination. Towards sunset I would sometimes see a small white cloud, and watch its approach; it would fix on a point of the rock that rose beside my cave; as twilight thickened it would unfold, its centre disclosing a floating throne of pearl, and its skirts expanding into wings of iris and aurelia that upbore it. By moonlight the pomp grew richer, and the vision became exceeding glorious. Myriads of lucent shapes were visible in that unclouded shower of light which fell from the moon on the summit of *myriads swam on its* opal waves, wafted in a fine web of filmy radiancy, canopied

with a lily's cup, and inebriate with liquid light. Among them sat the shadows of the lovers, sparkling with spheral light, and throned in the majesty of vision, but pale with the traces of mortality. There sat the lovers in sad and shadowy state together; so greatly unfortunate, so fatal, passing fond. Sometimes when stretched on my cold, lone bed, I have heard her voice warbling on the wind touches of sweet, sad music, such as I have heard her sing when she thought herself alone and unheard. I have risen and followed it, and heard it floating on the waters; I listened, and would have given worlds to weep. On a sudden the sounds would change to the most mournful and wailing cries, and Erminia, pale and convulsed as I saw her last, would pass before me, pointing to a gory shape that the waves would throw at my feet. Then they would plunge together into the waters, and where far off the moon shed a wan and cloudy light on the mid wave, I would see their visages rise dim and sad, and hear their cry die along the waste of waters.

"Often when in autumn the sun set among clouds and vapours, I sat at the mouth of my cave to watch the scenery that followed. The clouds dark and rapid, and broken with strong stains of red, would assume wild resemblances to things I scarcely recalled; ships, and towers, and forests on fire, and moving shapes of things that never lived. Sometimes they formed a castle, a black mountain mass of structure; its turrets were fringed with flame, and the gleamy spots below seemed like fires peeping through casement and loophole, and the sanguine waters that reflected its shade seemed to moat it with blood; and hosts of embattled vapours, flushed with the hues of the stormy sky, seemed to march in mid air to attack it. Then, while I gazed, Erminia, in the first flash of the sieging lightnings, would burst on my sight with a face of wrath and menace, and behind her another form, dark with the rage of tempests. Oh, worse than the rage of tempest to me was this sight!' I have fled to my cave, I have buried my face in my bed of leaves. But what shapes have I seen, as the keen and subtle lightnings, glancing through cleft and crevice, filled the cavern with sheets of paly blue!

"It was on one of these nights that, wild and restless as the tempest, a thought rushed on my mind; it was the only thought that for years had warmed my heart with a natural impulse, or convinced me I yet held alliance with the world of human beings. Do ye who read my story ask what was that thought?—I pray ye to pause a moment and think on my state.

"I was a nobleman, a representative of a noble house, whose honours I bore untarnished, and of whose honours I was proud. My wealth was great, my power greater; the sphere and shadow of my influence included thousands, who were cherished and sustained by it. I was loved by some, honoured by many, feared by many; and to the fear, such as remote and unbending dignity inspires, I was not averse. This was only a part of my character. I was, and I may now speak of myself as one who lives no more, a munificent patron, an invincible friend, an adoring lover. I was a husband, a father; my soul was wrapt up in my wife and children. In spite of my high thoughts and demeanour, I slept on the bosom of domestic love, with a fondness of clasp and a softness of rest, such as the mildest spirit might seek in the humblest shed of privacy; such I was. I might have run my race in peace and honour; such I was. And what had I been made by a brother I had cherished and saved? A murderer, a savage, an outcast of both worlds, a denizen of the wilds in habit, a demon in soul!

"There is no describing that depravation of humanity, both physical and moral, to which he had reduced me. Nebuchadnezzar, who was driven from among men and abode among the beasts, had probably no throbbings of remembered worth or dignity, no anguish of moral debasement to haunt his dark sleep. My sufferings comprehended the extremes of all a being could be human, and suffer. I was the lover of an object no power could obtain or restore; I was the idolator of a fame which was extinguished and lost; I was a villain with unimpaired conscience; I was a madman with perfect consciousness. Is there one fool enough to ask what remained to me?—REVENGE!!

"Yes, from the bare breast of an island rock, from its starved, and naked, and raving inhabitants—from a wretch who might have been shown for a spectacle through the streets at Naples, came a burst of vindictive energy, that laid one of its proudest houses in the dust.

"This event, of which I have hitherto sketched the motives, is the proper subject of this narrative; almost the moment I conceived it, I conceived its progress, its means, and the very point of the criminal's character and situation, on which it was to be made to bear. To show him the hollowness, *the worthlessness*, the nothingness of that for which he had sold himself

under sin, was no longer an object with revenge or with conscience; its own attainment had convinced him, forcibly and awfully, of it. In his letters I discovered he was a miserable man. It is usual to talk of the dreams of a murderer's night, but he was substantially wretched—wretched from suspicion—wretched from fear—wretched from the conviction that he had destroyed himself—for nothing. With him, therefore, appeal had been anticipated by conviction, and punishment superseded by remorse; but he was now surrounded by a numerous family, for whose welfare, perhaps, he endeavoured to reconcile himself to guilt, and to believe that the offences that had benefitted his children could scarce fail of pardon. His children were to shine out on the world in unexpected magnificence and unmixed acclamations; while mine, the native heirs of Muralto, mouldered in their mother's bloody grave, unwept but by their exiled father—the father who had laid them there! Whoever is acquainted with its direful event, may have now anticipated my purpose—to make the children the punishers of the father, and to combine the eternal spoliation of the name and honours wrested from me with the fall of their usurper. * * * *

"I am aware that so horrible an idea never entered the human mind before. Let him who is disposed to execrate me, only cast his eye on the preceding pages. I do not say I will be justified; but it will at least be confessed that he who was injured as never man was injured, should be revenged as man was never avenged. It is remarkable that, from the moment I conceived this idea, my reason was not only restored, with scarce a subsequent interval of insanity, but my powers were confirmed, condensed, invigorated to a degree of invincible, ironlike force and stability, to which alone such an undertaking could be possible; I had no failing, weakness of head or of heart—no suspension of my purpose, from the frailties of humanity or intellect, from that hour for ever.

"A total desertion of my savage habits was my first resolution; I inured myself, after many distortions of reluctance, to bear the sight of the human face and the sound of the human voice. After some time I crossed to the next inhabited islet. I endeavoured to reconcile myself to human life—to sit for an hour without start or exclamation—to eat, without walking about at my food—and (most difficult of all) to pass the night in a bed, where, at first, I found rest impracticable. It was here, when the first vehemence of my purpose had expended itself, I began to scan the difficulties that surrounded it, and to find them numberless and perilous. I am persuaded no being whose character was not partially tinged by madness, could have been adequate to its execution. I have no desire now to spend my time in magnifying the wonders of it, and gratifying a miserable ambition with the shuddering praise of the strength of a demon's wing in his flight to mischief—I have no intention of rehearsing my mental debates and toils—I merely purpose to tell their result.

"My first step was to pass into Turkey in Asia. I traversed most of the countries of Asia Minor; I visited Syria; I travelled into Persia; I crossed the Persian Gulf into Arabia. I traversed the continent of Arabia, and winding along the shores of the Red Sea, passed into Egypt; I visited its upper and lower regions, and returning to Cairo, embarked for Europe. An accident brought me to Candia, where, assuming the habit of a Greek monk, I went on board a vessel then bound to Rhodes, but which, finishing her voyage, left me in Sicily: there, outwardly reconciling myself to the catholic communion, I procured a recommendation to the superior of a convent in Naples, and returned to my native city.

"I do not mean to give a detail of the sufferings of a solitary stranger, in a progression of fifteen years, through countries fierce, lawless, and sanguinary. I acknowledge myself to have been almost constantly in a state of sufferance and danger, often in one of extremity. If it were asked by what means I escaped with life from such persecution, I solemnly declare I know of none except total poverty, a hardened constitution, and a mind of desperation. A resolution, the strongest that ever occupied a strong mind, was sustained by gigantic strength and hardihood of body, the fruit of my exile and my savagery. My object in this long progress was what no calamities could suspend, the study of the human character in its fiercer and gloomier features. Even a dungeon could show me warders, and torturers, and criminals. It will be asked, why did I seek a knowledge of the human character where it subsists in a state so rude and unvaried, where ignorance and oppression combine to forbid the expansion of elementary, or the acquisition of fictitious features, and to confine life to a weary, unimproving monotony?

"I answer, my search was after that part of the human character which is equally visible through all the modifications of society and the caprices of the individual, which is equally discernible in the savage and in the sage, but which is generally marked by more strong and prominent lines in the ruder parts of life. My search was for the existence of superstition in every form it assumes, and for every mode of influence that could be exercised on it; for the means by which that influence might be acquired, and the possible extremes to which the passion might be urged by art and terror. Had this search been pursued in Europe, the consequence might have been (what I dreaded more than the sufferings I encountered in Asia and Africa) detention, examination, discovery; perhaps an immersion into the bastile in France, or an eternal consignment to the dungeons of the Inquisition in Spain or Italy. In Asia, if my existence was destroyed, my name and purpose would perish along with it. I should not be remembered as the man who only achieved a vast thought, and died from the debility of its execution. From the first moment I was convinced that superstition was my only engine, the only instrument that could accomplish so great a purpose; the only one that could be applied to its most minute and its most operose parts alike; that could dissect the most subtle and capillary fibres of the human heart, and penetrate the iron fortresses of power; that could wrench the frame of nature and sport with the varieties of the human character; that could make the virtuous consider a crime as a duty, and the vicious make a deity of a dream. This was the only foundation that could support the structure that I purported to raise on it. I remembered my own struggles and reluctance, till something like a shadowing of fate stole over my mind; I remembered the wretched impostor that they brought to me at Baiæ.

"The execution of my purpose, perhaps, was some protection to me in countries whose wild inhabitants are yet deeply susceptible of the delights and the terrors of superstition: in Turkey, therefore, I was a Grecian conjuror; through Asia Minor and Syria I was one of those dervises whose supposed knowledge in secret studies is no obstruction to the sanctity of his person and profession; in Persia I was a Magian worshipper of fire, the most ancient superstition in the world; in Egypt I was all these successively, for in Egypt are mingled all the superstitions of the East. Among the vulgar I was a conjuror, but among the adepts only a novice; not in truth could I well be more had I been versed in all the dark wisdom of Europe, Rosicrucian, or Sully's, or Nostradamus, or Albertus Magnus's; had I been a student in the wizard walls of Salamanca, I must have bowed to the wands of the Oriental and African sages. There are among these men, however ignorant both in physics and literary antiquity, some powers still existing of the most extraordinary kind. I am perfectly willing to ascribe the wonders they produce to causes merely natural, but still the effects are such as prove an acquaintance with the depths of nature which the most erudite and studious European has not yet obtained.

"I mention, as an instance, that power of disarming serpents and noxious reptiles, possessed by some of the most ignorant and grovelling wretches I have ever met with in Egypt; a power which they pretend to exercise with spell and charm, but which, when I acquired, I found to be attainable by means merely physical. I mention these things merely to intimate, the line of operations I sought, and the powers I acquired, amid the luxuries of nature and the labours of art, the wonders of antiquity or the magnificence of recent dominion; in the mosque or in the cavern, the desert or the bazar, I pursued but one object; my labour was never remitted, nor my tenacity ever relaxed.

"It was in the spring of the year 1689 I returned to Naples, my first object to inquire into the situation and characters of the family, my next to be introduced among them. I easily learnt the former: the count was gloomy and solitary; the family lived in retired grandeur; the sons had many splendid qualities, but their minds were of the dark superstitious complexion of their house. The latter also was easy, for the count had become a devotee. It will, perhaps, be a matter of astonishment that, having arrived in my native city, and having means sufficient to prove my identity and my injuries, I did not prefer the substantial compensation of my restored honours and enjoyments to a visionary and bloody revenge.

"It will cease to astonish when my story is read with more attention. It will be discovered that, with me, ambition was only the ornament of life, happiness and love (however hostile to their softness my character may appear) were its substance, its soul. My name, my dignity, were only *the cupola that, though* raised to the summit, constituted the least necessary part

of the pile of my happiness. For whom should I seek to be great? was there another Erminia in the world? were my children's graves to be opened by the trumpet of a herald? They might be avenged, but never recalled. No: I saw, without a groan, the palace and castle built by my ancestors—I saw their jewels, their treasures, their magnificence, sparkling round the forms of those who had undone me—I saw without a thought of resumption, but with a determination of revenge. Ambition had not left a shadow on my mind; of love, only the soul subsisted still; but, of revenge, both body and soul lived within me in a state of vigour and vitality still capable of the most powerful functions, still imperiously demanding their sacrifice. From my own experience, I am convinced that revenge is the most long-lived of passions. Could my brother have poured at my feet his palaces, his treasures, his honours—could he have poured along with them, what was beyond the reach of human power to restore—my name, my peace, my inward dignities, unclouded and undebased—could he have done all this, I would have spurned it all. I had but one faculty, one passion, one appetite. My body was but a corporal vehicle for revenge; its spirit seemed to actuate me instead of a soul.

"Let those who wonder at the temerity of my undertaking, think on the requisites I possessed for its success, and the train of preparation those requisites had long been in. My body was as a body of adamant; my mind was capable of filling and directing the energies of such a frame. I was invincible to the fatigues of famine, of sleeplessness, or of toil; no difficulties could exhaust, no dangers could repel; the world, its temptations and its terrors, were like dust beneath my feet. I possessed a knowledge of the human temper, deep and accurate, together with a patience of caprices and anomalies which only experience can teach. No sallies of violence could intimidate, no rigour of obduracy could weary me. With regard to the immediate means of effecting my purpose, my mind, or rather my memory, was a perfect *thesaurus terrorum*. I had powers to confound the deliberate, and to scare the bold. My body as well as my mind conspired with my purpose. My figure was gigantic, my countenance scarce bore resemblance to humanity; the intonations of my voice were like the roar of the storm and cataract it had been my delight, in the rage of insanity, to imitate; and, above all, I possessed, from memory, a perfect knowledge of secret passages and subterranean recesses, both at Muralto and the palace at Naples; these I had loved to explore when I was their inmate from an enthusiastic passion for gloom and for antiquity. Such was the preparation. That I may not be thought to lay a chimerical stress on the influence of superstition, I shall mention some circumstances that occurred beyond the immediate range of my purpose. Amadeo, duke di Monte Ceruli, was a libertine whom I had known in the earlier part of my life—about ten years previous to my marriage, when I was a gay nobleman at Naples. I was with him and other cavaliers at an assembly upwards of thirty years ago; the conversation happened, strangely enough, to turn on the existence of spirits: the subject was more congenial to my mind than the babble of levity, and I spoke on it with my accustomed solemn energy. Monte Ceruli ridiculed the subject, and the emphasis with which I spoke on it. I did not choose to altercate with such a trifler, and giving the conversation a ludicrous turn, proposed that we should enter into an engagement, that whoever died first should appear to the survivor, as a punishment for scepticism, or a confirmation of orthodoxy. He accepted it, laughing; but it was not with laughter he received the proof. When, in the prosecution of my plan, I appeared to Ippolito at Naples, while surrounded by a party of cavaliers, I observed Monte Ceruli among the number. When I had produced the effect of my visit I retreated behind the tapestry, where a concealed door communicated with a secret passage, through which I escaped while they were searching for me. This was a contrivance, indeed, easily detected, but I had chosen my time well; it was easy to disappear amid the confusion of terror and drunkenness. The party dispersed in every direction in pursuit of me; as I was evading them I met Monte Ceruli, who, of all the party, was alone. He detained me—I heard others approaching; I dreaded discovery—I dreaded, at least, the dissolution of my spiritual character. I unmasked, and addressed him in my own voice, which I had carefully concealed since my return to Naples: in its hollow and peculiar tones I told him I was the spirit of his departed companion. He fell to the ground insensible, and I am told continued so till his death. On the Duke di Pallerini, who was sent by the king (in consequence of a confession made by a *dying domestic* to a monk at Naples, but which involved nothing but general suspicions) to the *mysterious* disappearance of the late possessor of the title, on him no such

influence was attempted. I knew the inquiry would terminate in my brother's detection and consequent punishment, for I knew his own terrors would betray him; but though I devoted him to punishment, I determined by no one but me should it be inflicted. Calling the duke, therefore, to another apartment, after adjuring him to secresy, I discovered myself, and proved the futility of a charge for the murder of one whom he beheld alive. It was owing to this resolution of reserving to myself the powers and mode of retribution, that a circumstance occurred, whose mystery is most dark and voluminous, and whose mystery can be disclosed only by me. I was (while yet a brother in the Franciscan convent) returning from a pilgrimage to Rome when a report, which was diffused everywhere, met my ear, that a discovery had been made by some dying man to a monk in Apulia, relative to the family of Montorio, whose honours, whose very existence, it was said, was involved in its substance.

"By whom such a discovery could be made (of which I believed myself the solitary possessor on the face of the earth), was of less moment to inquire than how to obstruct its disclosure. I was resolved that neither the Inquisition nor the Vatican, no power, secular or spiritual, should wrest my victim from me. The monk, it was reported, was on his journey to Rome, to procure an audience of the Pope. He travelled with all the inconsistency of fear in his preparations; he was escorted by a strong guard, yet affected to conceal his name and the motives of his progress. I had arrived, on the close of my pilgrimage, at a town called Bellano—I understood there were a number of travellers at the inn, and I hastened there, to receive some intelligence on the subject. I found them engaged in discussing it; a solitary, silent pilgrim, did not interrupt them. I was suffered to listen, and that was all I desired. I found that the monk was expected to pass the night at Bellano on his journey. Many, whose business lay in other directions, had quitted them, for a chance of meeting this man, about whom curiosity was thus vividly employed, and all had agreed to sit together in the great hall till he arrived, if his arrival was delayed till morning. About midnight the monk came. He looked pale, weary, and terrified with his undertaking. He looked around suspiciously and dejectedly. I was the only person who wore the sacred habit in the company; this accident determined his addressing himself to me, and to this I owe the obstruction of his progress. He spoke confidentially, as one weary of the restraints of silence and secrecy, and glad to unburthen a weak mind of a disproportioned load. He acknowledged he was terrified by the importance and danger of the commission imposed on him—the ruin, and probably the revenge of a powerful family.—'I would,' said he, 'I were in my cell again, at the foot of the little wooden crucifix beside my pallet; I am, however, safe to-night. I remember visiting this house before I took the vows; there is a chamber of peculiar construction in it. I have no dread of assassin, or spy, or emissary of the Montorio family, while sleeping in that chamber. I know not why, but my mind is wondrous heavy and fearful to-night.' I endeavoured to encourage him, and inquired the construction of the chamber he described.—'This house,' said he, 'was formerly the haunt of robbers, who contrived, in many of the apartments, devices for escape or concealment. In one of the chambers there is a trapdoor, acted on by a spring, which is continued through the wall to the adjacent apartment; beneath it is a flight of spiral steps, hollowed in the wall, and communicating with subterranean vaults, of which the extent is unknown. Should I be disturbed by any apprehensions, I can immerge myself beneath the trapdoor, and remain there unsuspected till all search or hope of my recovery had ceased.' Childish as this expedient was, I appeared to approve of it, and by affecting to doubt the principle of the construction, led him to explain it sufficiently for my purpose. To that there was but one thing wanting—how to fix him in that part of the room where the construction of the trapdoor might operate. To effect this, I stole to his chamber, and placed a small table, on which there was a crucifix, on the very spot where the boards were disjointed. Weary and timid, the monk retired to his apartment, mine (to which the spring extended, and which he had entreated me to occupy for his security) was the adjacent one. I watched him through a crevice of the wainscot, I saw him approach the fatal spot, and prostrate himself on it. At that moment I applied my hand to the spring (which was only a sliding rope with a weight, and which made part of the furniture of the hangings), the trapdoor opened beneath him, and I heard him plunge into the chasm with a suddenness that prevented his last scream, if he uttered one, from being heard. Never was a project so critically *completed*.

"He was swallowed up as by the earth opening her mouth; not a vestige of him remained when the trapdoor was replaced. He was precipitated through the circular hollow down which the stairs wound to a vault of depth incalculable. Of the confession, which he always carried in his bosom, he assured me there was not another copy extant. Its subject, therefore, had perished with him. The secret of the trapdoor, he also informed me, was unknown to the proprietors, and confined to me and himself. This information proved to be sufficiently true, for among the inquiry and commotion this strange event occasioned, no one suspected or examined the construction of the flooring. I was satisfied to remain ignorant of the means and agent in this extraordinary confession. I was satisfied to let it moulder with the corse of him who bore it, since I had now extinguished the last gleam of light that the hands of strangers had presumed to throw on the gloomy secrets of our house. Am I asked whether I felt no compunctious hauntings for the murder of an innocent man? I answer, as much as a giant, who scales a mountain, feels for the insects he crushes in his progress.

"Shortly after this event, I entered into the count's family as his confessor, and learned the characters of his sons. That was not indeed my first object—my first was to find out the grave of Erminia and her children, and there—— But I will not violate the sacredness of my sufferings; I will not, for they would not, if disclosed, be believed. No one would ascribe human feelings to me; no one could believe me capable of sorrow. I would not have mentioned the subject, but that the circumstances of my nightly penance there are connected with the events of my story.

"The brothers I discovered were of different characters. The elder, who resided at Naples, was volatile and impetuous; the younger, dark and deliberate. Perhaps those who think they have satiated wonder with my depravity, will still wonder that I should determine to sacrifice both. I understood that, united in the strictest friendship, they were inaccessible to the rest of the family. Had I assailed either separately, as their confidence was unbounded, the interference of the other would have frustrated my purpose; but as they held no communication with the rest of the family, their mutual confidence could only increase their mutual fear.

"Worlds should not bribe me to a detail of the devices by which I subdued the intellects and integrity of these youths to my purpose. Worlds did I say? What in the reach of imagination could prevail with me to retrace those images of wickedness and horror, but the vindication of my victims? Yes, their vindication; their vindication, which I now pursue with ten thousand-fold the devotion I once did their ruin. What but that could make me proclaim these mysteries of iniquity? What but that could make me live to proclaim them? I will prove it as plain—as palpable as daylight; it was impossible for mere human nature to evade or to resist the snares the subtlety of my vengeance had wound around them. Around them! Whom? But soft, if possible; not many hours remain to me.

"As soon as I understood their different characters, I commenced my assaults. Their distance from each other was an advantage to me; their different situations suggested different modes of temptation to me. Ippolito, who was in the concourse of a populous city, I determined to subdue by the force of spectacle and sensible representation, mixed with something of astrological jargon, to which I knew he was addicted. Annibal I devoted to the influence of solitary terror, and the supposed incumbency of a task assigned him by a spiritual agent—strong means to prevail with the inmate of an ancient castle, whose mind was gloomy, and whose sense of duty was rigid and inflexible.

"Over Annibal my influence was in a great measure anticipated by his own restlessness and solicitude, the uneasy effervescence of a vigorous mind, wasting itself in gloom and solitude. I heard him questioning an old domestic named Michelo, whom I remembered to have seen in other days, but the remembrance woke no kindliness in me now. I found Annibal so intent on his inquiries, and the old man, so contrary to all my expectations, so well prepared to satisfy them, that dreading the anticipation of my purpose from the increasing importunities of one, and the feeble reserve of the other, I interfered, and privately forbade Michelo to communicate with the signor any further. Whether my earnestness betrayed a resemblance to sounds and features Michelo must have remembered, or whether it was the weakness of a mind broken with age and superstition, I know not; but it is certain that from the hour *I used this intimation*, he ceased to believe me a human being; his terrors, though

they secured his confidence, preyed on his health, and I have to number this unhappy among my involuntary victims. If, indeed, he suspected me to be my former self, his penetration, or his memory, were beyond those of my own brother, or all who had ever known or remembered me; yet I do not think my travels, my hardships, my sufferings, anything, had altered me effectually, till my heart and disposition underwent that change that surpassed the impressions of all.

"Meanwhile my toils closed rapidly round Annibal. The tomb of Erminia, which I visited every night; her coffin, which, in pursuance of a rigid penance-vow, I tinged every night with my blood, witnessed strange encounters. Sometimes they watched me as I wandered thither with my lonely lamp, which they believed to be borne by no earthly hand; and sometimes they pursued me into the vault, whence they retired, shuddering with visionary horrors, and often besmeared with my blood.

"I was in the habit of visiting the apartments of Erminia; they had been deserted since her death, and I visited through avenues known only to myself, in undisturbed solitude and security. One evening, while I was gazing on the bloody traces that marked the floor where Verdoni fell, I heard steps approaching. I had scarce time to conceal myself behind the tapestry, when Annibal and Michelo entered. I was at first impelled to start forth, and scare them into flight; but reflecting that whatever increased the influence of superstition established mine, I contrived, by looking through a rent in the tapestry, which represented a figure in the act of pointing, and by communicating to its arm, the motion of mine, to impel them to a search which discovered the body of Verdoni. It had been interred in a recess of the wall by Ascanio.

"On another occasion, on entering the ruined chapel, which nightly witnessed my terrible orisons, I found Annibal and Michelo already there. I extinguished my lamp, and attempted to escape in the vault; Michelo, confused, and in the dark, obstructed me; with a nervous grasp I seized, dragged him in with me, and closed the iron grate. Annibal hastened to the castle for assistance. During this interval I addressed my prisoner in the hollow tones of death; I reproved his presumption, and darkly intimated those disasters which I was preparing for the house of Montorio. The old man listened to me in terror, and died the next day of the fears of superstition, and the dread of being involved in the punishment of crimes he suspected too justly.

"About this period, the monk to whom Michelo had made his dying confession, thought the suspicions it contained too momentous to be suppressed; he, therefore, communicated them to his superior, who laid them before the king, by whom the Duke di Pallerini was dispatched, to inquire into the disappearance of the late Count of Montorio, his wife Erminia di Amaldi, and their children. How this terminated with regard to the inquiry is already well known; with regard to my victim Annibal, its conclusion was momentous indeed. I did not think him falling into my snares with sufficient facility; I required to have him more in my own power, that he should look more to me as the proper agent of the wonders he had witnessed or imagined. I effected my purpose unsuspected. On the Duke di Pallerini's approach to the castle, I was commissioned by my brother (from whom I had never concealed my knowledge of his guilt, and who also viewed me with a kind of shadowy fear), to remove the mouldering corse of Verdoni, lest the duke, the extent of whose information they could not conjecture, should direct his search thither. I entered the apartments, removed the corse, and, retiring, left the passages open. I bore the remains of Verdoni to my closet, where, I believe, they were seen by Annibal's servant, Filippo, whose curiosity was, at least, sufficiently punished by meeting me in the close of the evening with the skeleton in my arms, which I was about to convey to a vault at the extremity of the passage I was traversing. I perceived this fellow, who was bold and curious, followed me; I raised the carrion head above my cowl, and he fled in terror.

"On that night Annibal repaired again to the forbidden apartments; I informed the count of his son's dangerous spirit of discovery, and led him to the spot. The criminals were confined; this was what I wished. On a mind weakened by loneliness and fear, I believed my influence would be resistless. Not easily convinced or subdued, Annibal long resisted the array of terrors I spread before him; I mingled opiates with his food, that I might enter his prison unperceived; I screamed in cooding and unearthly tones in the passages of the tower. I told him a tale that, while it strongly referred to the strange objects he had recently witnessed,

terminated in the terrible event to which it was my purpose to lead him. Still he resisted, though he resisted more feebly. I conceived another plan. I appeared to accede to a plan proposed by the count, to remove him by poison. I prepared an opiate of an extraordinary power; for, among the secrets of which I had acquired a knowledge in the East, those of pharmacy and philtre had not been forgotten. The operation of this I knew would be sufficiently strong to deceive his father with the expected resemblance of death; and while it continued, I purposed to convey him to the vaults of the castle, where, remote from all influence but mine, I believed he would cease to resist that influence longer.

"His prison was not sufficiently gloomy, nor were his spirits properly subdued for my purpose.

"The plan was defeated by the dexterity of Filippo, who contrived to administer to me the opiate I had prepared for his master; and during its effect, drew from my vest the keys of the passage through which I had intended to convey him. They escaped from the castle, nor when I recovered was I sorry for their escape. I knew I should overtake them, and when I did, the terror which the appearance of one they must believe invulnerable by poison, would excite, I knew would be more than a balance for the suspension of my influence during the interval of their flight. But the count was not so easily reconciled to the escape of the fugitives. Spies were employed, and immense rewards circulated for their discovery clandestinely; these were at length successful, about the time that Annibal, on his progress to Puzzoli, paused at a village where circumstances beyond the reach of conjecture detained him.

"The influence I had obtained over the mind of the count was mixed and extraordinary. My austerities, my superhuman abstinence and contempt of fatigue, and pain, and watching, had raised me to the highest pitch of his estimation as a devotee. For my interference between his danger and the requisitions of Pallerini, he felt a kind of visionary gratitude, that mingled awe and wonder with the control I held over him. He perceived that I was perfectly possessed, not only of those dark events whose secrecy he had believed inaccessible, but of almost every other part of his life; these subjects were therefore spared in our conversations by a kind of silent compromise. They were referred to, but not spoken of; he heard me hint my knowledge of them without starting, but he could not bear to speak of them himself. He certainly regarded me as a being not of this world; his mind, weakened by the perpetual harassings of guilt and danger, reposed on the idea of a visionary protector; and timid and jealous of its security, pleased itself with the thought of employing a secret and resistless minister of death. Hence he would at one time employ me as an assassin without remorse, and at another, consult me as a saint without superstition; for where the human character is not supposed to exist, human guilt vanishes also. Believing me one to whom all things were known, he ceased to have any compunctious reserve; and believing me one to whom almost all things were possible, he called on me, without hesitation, for that assistance, which he believed could be conferred by me without a crime

"Such was the influence I had acquired over a man agitated by the fears of unsteady guilt and the anguish of imperfect penitence, sanguinary from the dread of discovery, and superstitious from the experienced erosions of conscience, anxious to retain what had been acquired by blood, yet desirous to combine the pardon of guilt with its security. Such was the influence I was solicitous to acquire; the utmost extent of my vengeance was to the limits of this world. Men may smile at these illusions of romantic revenge, but it is certain that, while I devoted him to death, I led him a pilgrimage of saintly preparation to it, while no power could wrest my victim from me, or buy from me one of his dying groans. I prayed, I watched, I wept with him. I sentenced the sinner, but I tried to save the penitent.

"I will now rehearse the more dark and complicated means resorted to with Ippolito. I discovered, what in Naples is easily discoverable, a number of those wretches, who, under various denominations, profess to hold converse with another world. To these I told a tale sufficiently plausible, and what was more plausible, I told them out handfuls of gold. The liberality or the superstition of the count had supplied me abundantly. My plan required the aid of numbers, and it required a diversity and costliness of preparation; and, of all most difficult, it required that my victim should not be undeceived by the vulgar rapacity of my associates, which I satisfied clandestinely myself. My first application to Ippolito was in the jargon of his favourite study. On this, and many other occasions, the darkness, and the inconceivable swiftness of my motions, befriended the obscurity

I affected. Afterwards I concealed myself in the confessional of a church whither I had led him, and which I knew had a private recess, and left him with the belief that I had melted into the elements. Another time I led him to a vault, where lay a body, from whose mortal fate I wished to suggest to him his own.

" At all times, by my knowledge of the passages of the palace, I had opportunities of leaving letters in his apartment, and once of entering it while he was there, where my showing a family ring, and telling a mysterious story of its last possessor, contributed not a little to his wonder and perplexity. At length, when I believed him sufficiently impressed with fantastic notions of my character and agency, I led him to a subterranean vault, where the disguises of my associates, the quaint solemnity of our language, the blue and vaporous light that played on objects not to be described, displayed every device whose influence could abuse or witch the senses or the mind.

" But I discovered, in both my victims, that whatever facility they betrayed to the admission of gloomy and fantastic impressions, they both revolted with equal abhorrence of insulted integrity from the end those impressions were designed to lead to. Ippolito, impetuous and eccentric as he was pure and noble, would never have been entangled but in a web of wickedness so fine and intricate, that human strength could not bear its powers unhurt from its witching hold. By the skill of one of our associates, an exact model of the faces of Ippolito and the count was procured in wax; they were moulded into masks, and the former was assumed by another, who was in figure strikingly like Ippolito. This man, placing himself in a recess of the vault, where I led my victim, represented by his gestures, reflected in a shaded mirror, the anguish of a mind impelled to an involuntary crime; at the moment that Ippolito, touched by a gloomy sympathy, bent over the mirror, the man uncovered his mask, and Ippolito beheld his living likeness.

" The solicitude thus excited was augmented by delay and dramatic illusions, till, no longer master of his intellects, and scarce retaining his turbid and confused perceptions, he was led into another vault, and told that to obtain the knowledge he required, he must propitiate the spirit of the night by shedding the blood of a naked and unresisting victim, who was bound on an altar, dimly seen in the darkness of the vault. I remember his resistance too well. At length, by the temptation of that fatal thirst of invisible knowledge which constituted the whole wonder of my influence (the engine by which I could wrest the whole moral world), he was induced to plunge his poniard into the breast of a waxen image, which spouted out blood upon his hands, and from which, withdrawing the covering, I disclosed the face of his father.

" From that moment he was sealed and set apart as mine. He never could expel from his conscience the stain of imaginary blood; he never could expel that nameless dread that whispered, if the object he had mangled was not the living and corporeal frame of his father, it must be an inmate of that world which is peopled with shadowy resemblances of this. This conjecture confirmed the visionary power of those who could summon such appearances, that power verified its own predictions, and its predictions announced that he should perish as the assassin of his father. From that time I pursued him into crowds, as well as society; perpetually reminded him of the midnight hour—perpetually held up to him the gory weapon—and found, from his failing resolution, that even the influence of superstition may be darkened and deepened by the consciousness of guilt.

" In a short time he fled from my persecutions; he quitted Naples. This event I had expected from his impetuosity, and made sufficient provision for it. I had diffused everywhere what his imprudence had assisted me in diffusing, reports of his nightly wanderings, and of his being mated in some horrible league with unblessed souls. The report spread around him an atmosphere of moral pestilence; every one shrunk from his presence; while the terrors that attended the suspicion of his presence gave to his progress a notoriety that marked every step he took, even to the distance of Muralto. At this period, by the wayward flight of my victims, they were both conducted, though unconsciously, to spots so near each other, that my double agency was easily united.

" The count's confidence in powers which he believed were not those of a mortal minister, now compelled me to leave the castle. He had received from the abbess of a convent, whose name I now forget, but which was destroyed in the late commotions of the earth, a letter, acquainting him [illegible]he novice Ildefonsa Mauzoli, who had always showed the utmost reluc-

tance to assume the veil, had, in consequence of an accident, been seen by a young cavalier, who she understood was his son, and by whose sudden and impetuous passions, not only her profession was delayed, but even her release insisted on. She added, that Ildefonsa's resolution had been confirmed by the presumption of her lover, who, it was easy to discover, had made his professions of love and liberation but too acceptable to her.

"The count, on receiving this intelligence, evinced a distraction that amazed me; I could scarce pacify him by my promises to hasten to the spot and mar the dreams of the lovers. This I had, at all events, intended, as this was the period I intended to convince my victims no distance of space could shelter them from me.

"In the interval of my hurried departure, the count had but time to acquaint me that Ildefonsa Mauzoli was the unowned child of Erminia and Verdoni, who had been brought up in the solitude of a convent, and whom he had devoted to the veil, though in vain. He adjured me to hasten and prevent, by the most decisive measures, the event of this disastrous passion, of which, it was easy to see, he dreaded more than he disclosed of mischief and horror.

"I left Muralto, and when I saw Ildefonsa was convinced nothing but her final separation from Annibal could again place him in my power. She was the picture of her mother. I dreaded her beauty, I dreaded her excellencies, I dreaded those bland and balmy influences which innocence and love must produce on the most corroded mind. I felt that Annibal, in her arms, would wake from my persecutions as from a horrid vision. I determined she should die. Such was the count's determination; and the abbess, wearied and provoked by her opposition, acceded readily.

"In my journey to the convent I heard that Bellano, the place where the unfortunate monk had perished with his confession, was not a mile from the convent; it was now deserted and destroyed, rendered almost a waste by indigence and superstition. This intelligence suggested to me a new and singular resolution. I determined to visit it, to explore the vault into which the monk had been precipitated, and possess myself of the papers that mouldered there with his corse. In the event of a public development awaiting my purpose and character, I knew these papers might render me essential service. The approach to a place shunned by all was probably safe and easy, and as the abbess informed me there were vaults beneath the convent in the direction of Bellano, with the extent of which no inmate of either was acquainted, I suspected a communication between them and the immense and unexplored windings into which the subterranean passages at Bellano spread.

"I set out from the convent in the evening, and, lost in musing, wandered from my way, till looking round me, I beheld a range of mountain and rock I had never seen before. I was about to retrace my path, when near me, extended at the foot of a tree, I beheld Ippolito. I determined to improve this accident. I approached, addressed him, and then bounded away into a woody dell, so tangled and intricate that it defied all his attempts to penetrate. On emerging into the open country I perceived him still pursuing me, and was compelled again to change the direction I had adopted to avoid him; for it was the policy of my influence to render it rare and solemn. I stopped at a town where I guessed he would follow me, and where, after dropping some mysterious hints of the character of my pursuer, I desired he should be told I had proceeded to Bellano. Thither he followed me; and there, though impeded by the interruptions of him and his servant, I descended into the cavity, and found amid the decayed garments of my victim, who had been dashed in pieces by his fall, the important papers I sought.

"Ippolito followed me into the vault, as I expected. My purpose in leading him to Bellano had been to amaze with a wild and magic display of powers that seemed to mock the bounds of space and matter, sometimes to skim the air, and sometimes to dive into the entrails of earth. When I had effected this I glided away, and through passages which I had explored previous to his descent, I regained the cemetery of the convent of St Ursula. I entered the chapel time enough to discover that my plan had succeeded. Ildefonso, to whom a strong opiate had been administered, was extended on a bier; and after a tumult of unavailing opposition, she was borne yet insensible to the cemetery, where I left her with a villain of firmer hand than myself. Where extinguished humanity had never awoke a throb, the resemblance of Erminia made me—I will not say what—I will not pollute this page with a *human tear.*

"During the interval previous to Ildefonsa's imaginary death, Annibal's resort to the convent had given me opportunities almost undisturbed of renewing my persecutions. Agitated by unhappy love, and terrified by the unaverted hauntings of a being whom (supposed) poison could not destroy, Annibal's virtue or his patience hesitated almost to yielding. But my business was now with Ippolito.

"In the commotions of that night he had been wafted down the river, and the next day he entered Puzzoli, I know not with what purpose. I followed him unperceived, and the accidental mention of an absurd tradition suggested a plan, in the event of which Ippolito was utterly subdued.

"While I was revolving this plan, I perused the papers which I had found in the vaults of Bellano; they explained the mystery of the confession. Ascanio, whom I had pursued from the rock, and seen plunging into the waters, bruised and mangled, had crawled to a cavern on the shore. Fishermen, coasting along the isle, found him the next morning; and, half through compassion, half through curiosity, brought him to their habitation, and tended him till his recovery, if it could be called so. While he lay in anguish on his bed of straw, he was visited, like many others, with that compunction which suffering produces. He determined to disburthen his conscience of crimes that had only brought him misery, and, still weak and suffering, contrived to return to Italy. Here his wounds exasperated by fatigue, and his mental anguish increased by the terrors of immediate death; his reason failed him; and escaping from his companions, he wandered a maniac in the forests of Apulia till nature was exhausted, and he expired in the cottage of a peasant, having made his confession in the short interval of recovered reason. This document I enclose; it will serve with others to identify my narrative. I hasten on.

"I have now but little to disclose, except the device which subdued Ippolito finally to my power. I assumed a lay disguise, and told a plausible tale to the principal inquisitor at Puzzoli. I informed him that a most direful suspicion brooded over the character of a cavalier of the Montorio family, who was at that time in Puzzoli, and of whom it became the holy office to take immediate cognizance. I informed him that, betrayed by accident into his subterranean haunts, I had observe there an inscription, of which a copy was extant in the cathedral church at Puzzoli; (this was sufficiently true, for I had myself copied it as one of the decorations of our infernal scenery.) I proposed, therefore, that he should be led by some unsuspected contrivance to the spot, where persons stationed for that purpose might note his emotions at the sight. To render it more striking, the characters were illuminated with red wax resembling blood. A number of gazers crowded to the spot, and his unequivocal tokens of amaze and consciousness were witnessed by many who were uninterested in observing and noting them. The success of this expedient was decisive; he was immured in the Inquisition, where, under the character of a person whose influence might lead him to confession, I had uninterrupted access to him. To render him stationary was the great object; mine was to exhaust his resistance by the weariness of solitude and perpetual persecution.

"In the meanwhile my agents were busily employed in the discovery of Annibal, whom at length they traced, by means of his servant, to a wild hut in the windings of the wood. I communicated my information to the officers, who, in the rage of fear, commanded me immediately to seize and send them to the castle, where it was likely they would be tortured to discover a plot. Of the fate of Ippolito he was perfectly certain. His existence, so far as they could be connected with my own purposes, I resolved to acquire or, yet the conquest of Annibal's malevolence was not easy. The means I employed, though barbarous in extreme, required only a hand which was used to be the minister of a despotic mind, and I was myself compelled to perform the parts of my agent as well as my master; to the horrors I was exposed by the acts of my own

"Meanwhile my intercourse of Ippolito was suspended by a confinement of the extraordinary severity which he was enduring. For more than [illegible] a period which was [illegible] his [illegible] days. The rage of the [illegible] upon him in the dark, while I [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

whose flight from the forest had been intercepted by ruffians I had provided, and a guide I had corrupted. I lamented his escape to the count; the lady was carried to the castle.

"Amid these horrors, can it be believed that I feel compassion for the fate of this gentle, ill-fated woman? The count, on beholding her, felt a long extinguished passion for her mother revive. To gratify a romantic illusion of posthumous passion, she was arrayed in fantastic splendour by the count, and to appease fear and jealousy, was poisoned by his wife.

"I hasten on; I seem to myself to cleave billows of blood, and push away, as I proceed, the red and weltering tides with either hand. I introduced my victims into the castle at night. The hour approached. The persecution that had depraved their reason and blasted their existence, was no longer to be resisted. The hour, which nothing could retard or avert, approached rapidly. The count, restless under the burden of added guilt and augmented fear (the blood of Ildefonsa and the supposed flight of Annibal), had sent for me repeatedly in the course of that awful term; to facilitate my purpose, and prepare him for its event, I enjoined him an hour of solitary penance. I was again sent for by the miserable man. Agitated by the suspension of my purpose, I was about to break from him, when he called me back.

"'You are acquainted with my guilt,' said he, 'but not with its palliations; I have a secret reserve of expiation, a hold of hope and refuge for some years. Amid the mass of murders that stained our souls, we hesitated to shed the innocent blood of infancy. The children of my brother were discovered in the cottage where they had been conveyed by their faithful attendant from the massacre of their parents. They were discovered, but they were spared; we purposed to rear them in obscurity and safety. All the first children of my marriage perished. Terrified at a calamity which our smitten consciences interpreted as a judgment, and willing to purchase the security of our bloody honours by an act which was pleasant to the vacancy of natural love, we determined to rear the children of my brother, and to restore to them indirectly their lineal dignities. With the natural diffidence of villany, I concealed this from Ascanio. I even in my letters acquainted him they were dead; but Ippolito and Annibal are not my children, they are the orphans of my brother.'

"I heard him; I heard all; they were my own children—my own children, whom I had persecuted, corrupted, destroyed, tempted to murder, plunged in infamy, hurried to death; they were my own children. The deed was yet undone; I flew to my children's feet to suspend it; I could not speak; I could not say—'Hold, ye are my children.' I gasped, I writhed, I howled in speechless agony, but I had not power to utter a sound of human language. They broke from me; I fell senseless at their feet; they rushed to the chamber of imaginary parricide. When I recovered my faculties, when I dragged my spent limbs after them, my children were murderers.

"What their father had impelled them to could now be neither prevented nor concealed. Worlds could not buy again the moment in which the blow was struck; but worlds shall consume away before he who impelled shall finish its expiation. I have now no words, no voice of supplication, I cannot for my soul whine, or beg, or bend like others; all my powers are collected into one cry, deep and piercing, and exceeding bitter, 'spare my children.'

"I do not adjure compassion—I appeal to justice. They are not criminals—frenzy is not criminal. Their intellects were extinguished; fatigue, and sleeplessness, and visionary horrors, and all the train of devilish enginery that I had brought against them, had impaired the noblest frame of faculties that ever was abused by the wit or malice of devils. They are not criminals; they were impelled beyond all power of human resistance; the wisest and most upright of you that sit there to judge them, so wrought on and beset, would have been a maniac or a murderer. How often have I, with the passions of a demon, beheld them with astonishment. How often have I admired the glorious struggles of their indignation, the convulsions of their virtue. And they were my children! And all good angels slept. No monitory whisper, no inward shivering, told me to pause. Their innocence, their friendship, exclusive and strong, their distance and dissimilarity from all the children of my brother, struck me with no start of doubt, no thrill of conjecture. No, no.

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"*To be* *my wife*, my children myself again, could not have bribed me to outlive

this discovery; but for them, and their vindication, I have done it. I intended to have gone off in the dark cloud of my purpose, mocking the wonder of mankind, and shrouding my retreat in the eternal train of shadowy fear and gloomy remembrance. But I am compelled to cast it off, and to stand bare and shrinking in the eye of mankind; I am compelled to say I am the miserable Count of Montorio, the miserable husband, the most miserable of fathers. I am compelled to say this, but I will at least not say it like other men. No, I provoke, I solicit punishment. Bury me under manacles, macerate me with your tortures, let every hour bring more than the pangs of death, yet let me be many hours dying.

"I feel my crimes deserve it; I am a monster, beneath whom the earth groans. To one demon passion I have sacrificed the whole of existence; in revenge I butchered Verdoni, in revenge I murdered my wife, in revenge I—oh! let me not say—I have destroyed my innocent sons. I have been sated with revenge, and let revenge be now sated on me.

"Oh, my sweet, noble boys! Can it be nature that springs up in a heart so blasted as mine? The thoughts of ye flow over its avenues, so parched and flinty, like the first fall of heaven's dew on the desert, long waste and waterless! Thoughts so new and dear, impulses so fresh, hopes like the first hours of vernal life, all must be extinguished. Though my children are spared, they are not spared to their father! Their miserable father must not see them live! Yet live, my children, though not for me. I dare not, I will not think. Oh! let me not be sent from the world as I have lived in it, cursing and despairing!"

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This paper enclosed the confession of Ascanio, and other and equally valid documents of consequence. It was read with astonishment, but could neither be disputed nor distrusted. The court sat late, but as almost every point of inquiry had been anticipated by the count's memorial, they sat rather to indulge their amazement in copious debate. It was resolved, however, immediately to secure the person of the countess, to take possession of the estates and castle of the family in the name of the king, and to summon from the Abruzzo a woman named Teresa Zanetti, sister to the attendant of the Countess Erminia; but she had anticipated the summons of the court. She had heard, though imperfectly of the direful events in the Montorio family, and ascribing them, with the prompt application of guilt, to the secret she had so iniquitously preserved, she hastened to Naples to make a confession while yet she had the power of making it voluntarily. Her testimony was full and clear; she related that on the night of the Countess Erminia's death, her sister Hesperia Zanetti, pale and distracted, had rushed into her cottage in a forest a few miles from Muralto; that she had scarce breath to hint that her lady had perished by violence, and to implore shelter and safety for the two children she bore in her arms, when exhausted by fatigue and strong emotion, she expired. Teresa amazed and terrified, yet forbore to take any measure for the preservation of the children, till Ascanio, tracing the flight of the too-faithful Hesperia, discovered them in Teresa's cottage. Whether his employers were weary of carnage, or averse from the murder of infants, his instructions were to spare the children, but to secure the secresy of the woman. This was too easily effected, the woman dreaded their vengeance, and coveted their gold; and when, some years afterwards, the children were substituted for two sons of the count who had lately died, she concieved the restoration to their paternal honours was an abundant compensation for the concealment of their real parentage.

This awful history of human passions was now fully unfolded. Had a witness of higher dignity been required, the Duke di Pallerini (whose unsuccessful charge had been owing to the strictness of his honour, and had drawn on him the displeasure of his sovereign), was now discharged from his obligation to secresy, and was ready to attest that he had recognized Orsio Count of Montorio in the confessor Schemoli.

CHAPTER VI.

"'——————————— The same
That from your first of difference and decay
Hath followed your sad steps————
'Twas no one else, all's cheerless, dark, and deadly."—LEAR.

"Te teneam moriens deficiente manu."—TIBULLUS.

"And thy dear hand with dying ardour press."—GRAINGER.

Over a train of events so momentous, so complicated, so mysterious, the judicial court paused in total perplexity of judgment, in wonder which excluded decision. There was no precedent to direct them, no prescribed rule to apply to such an emergency; indignation was distracted by a diversity of depravity, and justice suspended by unresisted compassion.

At first, the guilt was so obvious and enormous, that a sentence of unqualified severity was pronounced against all the criminals. At this dreadful intelligence the families of Amaldi and Alberotti, accompanied by the most distinguished of the nobility, hastened to the palace, and throwing themselves at the feet of the king, implored him not to bury in ruin and disgrace a family whose high and extensive connexions would diffuse mourning and consternation through Italy. Even the family of Verdoni generously pleaded for its enemy, and the court was required to revise its sentence.

Ippolito and Annibal waked from their horrible dream, and found themselves murderers, without the vindication of resistless necessity, or the authority of divine commission. They were soon acquainted with the real agent and cause of their crime, and the diminished burthen of parricide was the first impulse that gave motion or relief to their stupid and stagnated dejection.

They sank on their knees in gratitude. Before this period they had neither spoken nor moved since their entrance within the walls of St Elmo, except when the officers, searching Annibal, found, and attempted to take from him, the picture of Ildefonsa; then he shrieked fearfully, and his convulsive resistance became so furious, that they were compelled to release it. From that moment he sat in the same posture, grasping it firmly with one hand, but apparently unconscious of what he held.

Ippolito emerged into reason first: the officers of the prison, to whom the general impulse of strong compassion extended, permitted the brothers to meet without witnesses, or any of the vexatious restraints of confinement. On their first meeting, Ippolito's tears dropped on a vacant and insensible countenance; but in a short time Annibal appeared sensible of some pleasure from his brother's presence, and held out the hand of silent kindness on his departure; and at length, though slowly, recovered his faculties uninjured.

They were constantly together; fraternal fondness brightened even the gloom of a prison and the terrors of guilt; but they had many dark hours. Annibal, ruined in love as well as in hope and existence, was the more dejected of the two, and the soothing remembrances of passion were darkened by the imminent horrors of incest. He had stronger motives—moral motives—for his depression, than Ippolito; the latter had consented to guilt in a convulsion of passion; the former from a conviction of reason—of reason, though perverted, strongly exerted. Ippolito, therefore for the perpetration of the crime felt only ordinary compunction, while Annibal's was mingled with a kind of gloomy disappointment, that the supposed agent of Heaven was only the victim of a monstrous illusion.

It was in one of those dreary conferences that melancholy seeks her solace and her food from, that the door of the apartment was thrown open, and a form glided in, so faint, so fragile, so hardly visible, that while Ippolito clasped it in his arms, he almost doubted the evidence of his touch. It was the face of Cyprian, but the form of a woman. "I am no longer Cyprian," it murmured; "Cyprian was the guardian of your innocence; but for him there is no longer any employment. Let me assume my original name and form—they are disastrous, and therefore are better suited to this hour. I am Rosolia di Valozzi, who loved you, who lived for you, whose last proof of most unhappy love is to die with you!"

Ippolito wondered and believed. He held to his heart that rare and wondrous woman, who, disguising her sex and hazarding her life, had quitted the convent, where, in the anguish of love contending with religion, she had assumed the veil, and, entering into the family of

Montorio, in the page had sustained the sufferings, without the hope, of love; had devoted herself to the amelioration of Ippolito's mind and character, without the solace of ever being even known to him; and now that all effort was fruitless, and all hope extinct, came, amid the horrors of a prison, and the certainty of her own direful punishment, to obey the last impulse of love that was "strong as death." In penitence for her apostacy, she had resolved to pursue her arduous task, uncheered by the gratitude, unrepaid by the affection of him for whom she toiled, and watched, and wept. She resolved never to disclose her sex or her name, or violate the purity of a vestal passion, by subsisting it on the grosser food of earthly love. She lived unknown—she wept unpitied—she loved unrequited.

"The only indulgence I allowed myself," said she, "was sometimes to read to you fragments that described the life and passion of a votarist of unhappy love. They were my own; she whom I described as thus loving, and thus suffering, was myself. I could not refuse myself the compassion you sometimes gave to sufferings of which the victim was so near and yet unknown; I loved to feed the sick fancy with sounds that could no longer excite guilty hope, or flatter desire; I loved to hear myself bewailed as dead, and triumph in the sad resolution that sought only the solace of vain and posthumous pity."

Annibal, now recognizing Rosolia, asked an explanation of that mysterious night when she wept over the picture of Ildefonsa, but could not disclose the fate of the original.—"Ildefonsa and I," said Rosolia, "were educated in the same convent; melancholy and enthusiasm endeared us to each other; she was the confidant of my fatal love, she was the assistant of my escape. When I saw you worshiping her picture I endeavoured to dissuade you from searching for her, for I believed by that time she had assumed the veil, and that your search was hopeless."—"Would it had been so!" said Annibal, retiring, but grasping the picture still.—"But we, my love," said Rosolia, "we must have done with softer thoughts—that time is gone by; we are for the dark hour, for the valley of the shadow of death! Oh! if beyond that misty vacancy that spreads before us, some bright and peculiar world, some unearthly tract should be disclosed, where no obstructions, cold and dark, shall mar the passion of immortals, where it will be no crime to love!"—"Alas, my love!" said Ippolito, "are these dreams of bliss for a murderer?"—"Or for an apostate!" shrieked Rosolia.—"Oh, I have gone too far!" They wept in each other's arms.—"I thought my last moment of weakness was past," said Rosolia; "oh, I feel they will never cease while I gaze on you. Might I dare to say it, surely I would say I have loved thee with an immortal love; anguish, and fear, and disappointment, the death of love, it bore them all, it mocked at calamity, and it survives in death. Ippolito! oh, Ippolito!" she cried, crowned in the luxury of sorrowful passion, "oh, how I love you at this moment!"—"But shall we indeed meet again, Rosolia?" said the sad Ippolito—"shall we see each other with these eyes?—shall I behold you in that form again and know it, Rosolia, or rather Cyprian, my better angel, my little benignant guardian—shall I know you in those bright worlds where all are so like what you would have been to me?"—"Oh! those words recal me," said Rosolia, "these hours demand other thoughts, high, and solemn, and unearthly. Kneel with me, my beloved! we are for the dark and awful conflict of the soul, for the depths of prostration, and the strife of prayer!—Kneel with me, my beloved! I feel my strength will just support me till your pardon is assured by penitence, and your spirit is free as those that have never erred."

They were about to kneel, and Annibal knelt too in his solitary recess, still holding to his wasted heart the picture of Ildefonsa, when Ippolito, starting, caught Rosolia to his heart, and held her long and fervently.

"Let me," said he, "give this moment, this one moment, to human thought, this one tear to human remembrance! Oh, Cyprian! Cyprian! think of those times when happy and innocent!" (His voice was lost.) "Oh! think of something unutterably fond and soft for this one moment—think of all that is rising in my heart this moment—think human thoughts, and melt with me in human sorrow, my love! my faithful love! my fond dying love!" he repeated, mingling the tears and kisses of rapture and anguish too sweet and bitter for words. The vestal struggled in vain with the madness of the moment. They remained locked in wild and speechless fondness. Annibal, lost in prayer, dared not to look on them: he could not look on the picture.

At this moment the doors of the apartment unfolded, and the officer who presided over

that tower of the prison where the brothers were confined, entered with the air of a man, who is rejoiced to communicate joy, and announced the altered sentence of the court. Ippolito and Annibal were pardoned, but required to leave Italy for ever. Orazio, Count of Montorio, was doomed to death: the estates, the castles, and the palaces of the family, were confiscated, the title extinguished, and erased from the list of nobility, and the name forbidden to be revived or borne within the territories of Naples.

"But his life is spared!" cried Rosolia, sinking at Ippolito's feet. She was raised, but to linger for a few days of resigned misery; the shock of sudden joy had been finally fatal to a frame worn to a shadow with strong emotion, and trembling with precarious existence. During this interval she mentioned the harmless advantage she had taken of Ippolito's visionary temper in her introduction to him; it was her face that he beheld in the glass when, drawing off her mask, she looked over his shoulder. It was she, too, who, alarmed by his language at Naples, had sent the officers of justice to Muralto, not to apprehend, but to protect him from a danger she could not define. But these, and all other subjects of temporal consideration, vanished as her dying hour drew nigh; it drew nigh with darkness and doubt; her religious impressions awoke, and she dreaded that her mortal love had carried her too far. Yet still she clung to the sight and image of Ippolito; and when she could no longer see, she extended her cold hand to him, even when she was no longer sensible of the pressure; her lips still endeavoured to murmur his name, till sense, and thought, and life were extinguished, and the victim of love was no more.

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There was a different death-bed scene exhibited at the castle of Muralto. The officers of justice, with decent reluctance, proceeded to announce the demolition of the honours, the name, and the wealth of the house of Montorio, to its surviving representative. They were ushered into the sumptuous chamber, where, amid her family who wept, her physicians who consulted, and priests who prayed, the countess lay extended on her bed, with death in her face, and a stern tranquillity on her brow.

The officers, with many pauses, pronounced the sentence of the law. The countess was silent. "Madonna," said her confessor, "do you hear what the officers of justice have pronounced?"—"Who is it that addresses me?" said the countess. "It is your confessor," said the priest. "Has he forgotten that the Countess of Montorio will be addressed by no other title?" said she, with a haughtiness of tone that contended with death. "That title, lady, is no longer yours," said one of the officers. "What does he say?" said the countess, faintly. "He tells you the truth," said the confessor, with energy. "Lady, it is a solemn hour; I adjure you to recall your thoughts, and meditate rather your peace with Heaven." "Your wealth and estates are confiscated," said a harsh and ignorant priest; "your palaces and your pomp are levelled with the dust; your———"—"And our name, our title?" said the countess. There was a deep silence. "The name, the title of Montorio?" she repeated, suddenly rising from her pillow, her eyes darting fire, and her voice thrilling with the energy of passion. "They are extinguished for ever," said one of the attendants. The countess fell back on the bed; her face was concealed, but a convulsed and broken sound, murmuring through the stillness of the chamber, announced the awful dissolution of guilty ambition.

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Since the hour of his confinement, the Count Montorio had been allowed no remission, no indulgence; he had required none. When the attendants entered his apartment, they found him engaged in writing so deeply that he never raised his head, or seemed sensible of their presence. From the time it was finished he appeared restless and agitated, but still silent. The sentinel who watched at his door heard him pace his chamber all night; but from the time that the final sentence of the court was known he became profoundly still.

His only request was to see his sons, and this was urged with such earnest and unceasing vehemence, that at length it was accorded. The night previous to that appointed for his death, his sons were conducted to his apartment. The scene was solemn. The dark habits, the clank of chains, the heavy tread of the armed sentinels, the cheerless and funeral light of the torches, the rush of sudden motion breaking on the silence of night and a prison, and that hushed again, hushed by the pause of breathless silence that followed, were impressed on the minds of the witnesses.

The children knelt to ask a blessing of their father, the wretched father knelt to ask forgiveness of his children. Some of the attendants wept aloud, and the sternest turned aside and veiled their faces.

During an interval of two hours not a coherent sentence was uttered, all were cries of mingled anguish and sentences broken by bursts; the sorrows of late and unavailing recognition lost in the deeper distress of inevitable separation. Orazio lacerated the feelings of his children by perpetual prostrations, and the harrowing spectacle of paternal humiliation; these, when they could not prevent, they partook, and sunk together with him on the ground, from which he could not be raised. As the hour of separation, prolonged by cruel indulgence, arrived, the distress grew more terrible; he would not be torn from his boys, on whom he called, as he alternately embraced them in every sound in the compass of distress, from the smothered, tremulous murmur that is lost in sobs to the ceaseless, shapeless maniac yell of misery, that stuns the ear and hears nothing but its own despair. The attendants, faltering, approached. With the shriek and grasp of a mother he held his children to his breast, folding his mantle, and bending over them with the unconscious provision of fear.

The sons, as they yet clung to the embraces of death, felt themselves bathed in their father's blood! They recoiled: his agony had burst one of the larger vessels, and the blood gushed from his mouth in torrents. The prisoners were removed, the medical attendants of the prison were summoned, and the monks who assist and exhort the criminals, hastened to the chamber of the dying man. Ippolito and Annibal knelt at the door; his broken and blood-stifled groans were fearful. They stopt their ears, and turned their asking faces to the attendants, who, horror-smote and dumb, quitted the apartment every moment. At length a priest, who crossed himself, came forth to order the bells of St Elmo to toll, while he proceeded to the chapel to read the prayers for those who are in the agonies of death. The brothers grasped his habit, but they could not speak. "Release me," said the monk, "I would pray; I have beheld a sight which has left me no power but of prayer." They held him still. "When all is over," said he, moving from them, "you will hear the toll of a bell that announces that the sufferer for whom we pray is no more." They listened; all was still for a moment.

* * * * *

A low and general murmur broke from the chamber of death. The bell tolled; the brothers prostrated themselves, and prayed for the departing soul. The attendants passed out. "Did you hear the last words he uttered?" said the governor of St Elmo to the principal confessor. "I could not hear his confession," said the priest. "It was no confession," said the governor: "the words were, 'The last of the Montorios has not perished on a scaffold.'"

* * * * *

"Such," said the narrator, "was the fall of the Montorio family, in whose fall the dispensation of a higher hand is visible to the most weak and limited eye. He who sought his own elevation, and the aggrandizement of his children, was defeated and destroyed by him whom he had sacrificed to his ambitious wickedness. He who sought vengeance as atrocious as the crime that provoked it, found it poured out on his own children; and they who desired the knowledge of things concealed from man, found their pursuit accompanied by guilt, and terminated by misery and punishment.

"Of the rest of the family there is little to be known; the daughters entered into convents, and the sons into foreign service under assumed names: but the unhappy men, whose story I have related, were everywhere distinguished by their silent bravery, their solemn melancholy their lovely affection for each other, and their reluctance to the society of women."

THE END.

RINALDO RINALDINI,

CAPTAIN OF BANDITTI.

A TALE OF THE LAST CENTURY,

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF VULPIUS.

FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY J. CLEMENTS, LITTLE PULTENEY STREET,
FOR THE PROPRIETORS OF
THE ROMANCIST AND NOVELIST'S LIBRARY.
1841.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

ALL Italy speaks of him. The Appenine mountains and the Sicilian vales resound with the name of Rinaldini. It lives in the songs of Florence and Calabria, and in the ballads of the Sicilians. From the summit of the Alps to the extremity of the Appenines men talk of his achievements, and when the garrulous villagers of Calabria assemble in the evening before their doors, every one is ready to relate some adventure of the Valoroso Capitano Rinaldini. 'Tis a pleasure to witness the eagerness and emulation they express. The shepherds of the Sicilian vales alternately entertain each other with stories of him; and the simple peasant, though exhausted by the heat and labour of the day, seems reanimated the moment he begins to talk of Rinaldini, amid a circle of his acquaintance. Wives and maidens, young men and boys, all listen with delight when their fathers and husbands speak of him; nor does sleep oppress their eyes, if their labours be but enlivened with a story of Rinaldini. He is the hero of the soldier's tale in the guard-room, or the lonely watch-tower upon the coast; and of seafaring men when detained unwillingly on shore, or becalmed upon the ocean. Hills and vallies, spinning-rooms and cottages, alike resound with ballads of Rinaldini.*

Here then follows the history of this extraordinary man, in which the adventures related of him are collected together, and arranged in proper order of time; and if the tale be but half as pleasing to my readers, and excite in them but half as lively an interest, as among the inhabitants of Calabria, of Florence, and of Rome, though they may have taken it up but to gratify curiosity, or chase away the dull moments of slow-paced time, they will not lay it down dissatisfied. Such, at least, is my proudest wish.

Written on St Rosalia's day, 1798.

* Rinaldo Rinaldini lived in the former part of the last century.

RINALDO RINALDINI.

The boisterous winds rolled over the Appenines, like the mountain-waves of the ocean, and the aged oaks bowed their lofty heads to the storm. Rinaldo and Altaverde had kindled a fire beneath a projecting rock, and sat sheltered in a narrow dell. The night was dark, thick clouds concealed the moon, and no cheering star twinkled in the heavens.

Altaverde.—This stormy night exceeds everything I have ever witnessed! Rinaldo, are you yet asleep?

Rinaldo.—I asleep! I like such weather; it rages here and there, around us, close to us, in this breast of mine, and everywhere!

Alt.—Captain, you are no longer the same man you were.

Rin.—'Ts true. Once I was an innocent boy; but now—

Alt.—You are in love.

Rin.—I am a captain of banditti.

Alt.—Has your cara sposa found it out? When you appear in great towns and cities, who but takes you for one of the richest noblemen, and of the most ancient house?

Rin.—And yet a price is set upon my head!

Alt.—And who will earn it?

Rin.—Perhaps one of my own band.

Alt.—For shame! They who have sworn fidelity to you will never be guilty of such an action.

Rin.—Oh, they are men, and bad men. Good, you cannot, by heavens, call one of us!

Alt.—On that we shall differ. But you are in a bad humour. Will you drink? No? Well, then, I'll drink alone. What boots it now to lament and grumble? Now it is too late.

Rin.—Alas! woe to me and thee, and all of us, that it is too late! Oh, Altaverde! to what end shall we come?

Alt.—To that which is decreed us by fate; and after we are dead, whether worms, fish, or crows, fatten upon us, is more indifferent to us than to hear how his holiness the pope dined; for it will not be our business, at any rate, to pay the grave-digger. There is but one road into life for kings and beggars, but there are many doors out of it; and whether we depart by the middle or side door is unimportant. Die we must; and if it be the will of heaven, we may as well die peaceably in our beds as any other man.

Rin.—Peaceably?

Alt.—And how many die peaceably? Almost every man dies with pain and agony.

Rin.—But not with shame and ignominy.

Alt.—Since you have been in love, one can scarcely say a word to you. Who brought you among us?

Rin.—My own thoughtlessness.

Alt.—Then quarrel with that, and be not enraged against yourself. What is past is past; and all you can do for yourself, is to take care of the future. Do that, and you will have nothing more to reproach yourself; for if you fall, it will not be your fault. Go; serve your country with your life and fortune; devote your body, your soul, all your thoughts and exertions, to its advancement; and still, if fortune pleases, you may rot in a jail, though innocent of every crime. Are there not innumerable examples? Both ancient and modern history abound in them. How many benefactors of their country have died in chains! Should this, then, be your lot, you will at least have no cause to complain of your country's ingratitude; for you have taken from mankind, and mankind will but take from you in return; and thus your account is balanced.

Rin.—As we are old friends, I excuse you when you talk such folly.

Alt.—For the same reason, I excuse your ill-humour. My folly, as you call it, makes me a philosopher; but your ill-humour is of no use, and makes you intolerable. What would you have been had you still continued at Ostiala, tending your father's goats?

Rin.—What, alas! I am not now—an honest man.

Alt.—But you have performed actions for which the most honourable of mankind might envy you.

Rin.—They are of no value, for they were done by a public robber.

Alt.—That cannot substract from the value of noble actions. The devil himself may act nobly, although he be a devil.

Rin.—He who pursues a dishonourable line of life can scarcely perform anything truly honourable.

Alt.—A curse on that sentiment! Have you not frequently drawn forth tears of joy? Has no man remembered you in his prayers? Has no man ever given you his blessing?

Rin.—Alas! they knew not they were giving it to a robber.

Alt.—Your noble actions, then, have gained you tears of joy, and the prayers and blessings of mankind.

Rin.—Yet they can avail me nothing.

Alt.—Then learn to flog yourself, and turn monk. Why thus disparage the noble actions you have performed? Have you not often been a more powerful protector of right and justice than the magistrates, whose office rendered it their duty?

Rin.—And who gave me a right to do so?

Alt.—Humanity.

Rin.—Oh that it had left me to tend my goats! I tell you, I can neither approve nor boast of my actions; and even should some of them be thought to deserve applause, yet the bad ones are far more numerous, and will, doubtless, one day bring me to the scaffold.

Alt.—Are you there already?

Rin.—Oh, Altaverde, who knows the hour of his end?

Alt.—No man, and so much the better; otherwise no one could sleep quietly in his bed; and sleep is the best of all human enjoyments.

Rin.—Can we, then, sleep quietly?

Alt.—I am almost asleep now; so, good night. Take care not to let the fire go out; and when you want to sleep yourself, wake me.

Accordingly, Altaverde went to sleep; and Rinaldo, sighing, took up his guitar, and sang—

Once, with the happy, good, and gay,
Sweet innocence led on my youth,
While, taught through flowery vales to stray,
I sported with fair peace and truth;
But now, with conscious crimes oppress'd,
Wild gloomy cares, and anxious fears,
I waste my life in fruitless tears,
And sighing, beat my anguish'd breast.

While free from guilt, from anguish free,
I view'd the cloudless, azure skies,
My soul was an unruffled sea,
A mirror of Heaven's peaceful joys;
But now, as raging storms affright,
And rob all nature of her rest,
With horrid crimes my soul oppress'd,
Is darker than the darksome night.

My guardian angel, forced away,
With grief my lot to fate consigns;
Despair has marked me for her prey;
My soul to torture peace resigns.
Faded is hope's once flowery wreath,
Now changed to vice's galling chains,
Changed all my joys to hell-born pains;
Unblest in life, and infamous in death.

But now one of the dogs, that lay before the fire, barking, Altaverde started up and seized his musket. Rinaldo had scarcely cried out—"Who's there?" before the sign was given that one of their party was arrived. The dogs returned to their rest, and Nicolo joined them.

Alt.—Well, what's the matter?

Nicolo.—I am come to inform you that we have heard the bells of some mules at a distance.

Alt.—In such a night as this?

Nic.—They must have lost their way.

Alt.—You are all still near the hermitage?

Nic.—All except Pietro and Giambattista, who are out upon the scout. The remaining thirty are all together.

Alt.—Is not Girolamo still with you?

Nic.—Yes; and rejoicing already in the capture of the mules.

Alt.—I do not doubt it.

Rin.—Altaverde, had you not better join him? You know Girolamo is not overstocked with prudence.

Alt.—As you please.

Rin.—Send Cinthio to me: I will wait here for him.

Alt.—'Tis well.

Rin.—And if you can avoid bloodshed——

Alt.—Most surely, if it be possible.

Nic.—Captain, will you remain here alone?

Rin.—Till Cinthio comes I will.

Alt.—Take a little sleep, captain.

Rin.—God grant I may! Leave the dogs with me.

Alt.—Good night.

Nic.—A happy meeting.

Thus departed Nicolo and Altaverde. Meanwhile, Rinaldo threw some wood on the fire, then lay down beneath a tree, and drew his cloak over his head, while the storm raged above him, and the dry wood loudly crackled in the flame.

"Alas!" cried Rinaldo, with a sigh, "once could I exclaim with confidence whenever I closed my eyes to sleep, 'Protect me, ye guardian angels,' but now I can neither pray nor close my eyes in sleep. Oh that I could relieve this anguish with tears."

The dogs barked. Rinaldo threw off his cloak, and starting up, seized his pistols. The dogs sprang furiously upon a man; but Rinaldo called them back, approached the stranger, and beheld a venerable old man with silvered hair and beard, and dressed in a brown great-coat. His right hand held a staff; in his left was a lantern with the light extinguished, and a little dog anxiously leaped about him.

"Who are you?" said Rinaldo, as soon as he had quieted his dogs.

Old Man.—I am known by the name of the Old Man of Oriolo Hill, and am come from the adjacent territories, where, according to my custom, I have been procuring provisions, with which I am returning to my hermitage; but the wind has extinguished my light, and if I am not mistaken, though I know the country pretty well, I have got out of my road. Permit me to light my lamp, and I shall presently find my way. Good night.

Rin.—Old man, why do you look so stedfastly at me?

Old Man.—I am glad to have found you by this fire, and to have an opportunity to light my lamp.

Rin.—And who do you take me to be?

Old Man.—To know or not to know who you are, is to me indifferent. The knowledge of men is no longer interesting to me.

Rin.—I am unfortunate.

Old Man.—I am sorry for you.

Rin.—My fate has compelled me to wander among the vallies of the Appenines; and Rinaldini, the famous robber, renders these regions very dangerous.

Old Man.—'Tis true.

Rin.—I fear that cruel man.

Old Man.—Cruel. 'Tis said he deserves not that reproach, I have myself twice applied to him for favours. I was desirous of having a letter of protection for my little cottage.

Rin.—Do not deceive yourself regarding him.

Old Man.—'Tis of little consequence. The few years I have to live he may rob me of when God Almighty pleases. The debt of nature must one day be paid. If he set fire to my cottage, I can build another; gold he will not find; and if he kill my two goats, the farmers of the neighbourhood, who love me much, will give me a couple more. Be it as God Almighty pleases.

Rin.—Are you in want?

Old Man.—He who has fortitude feels no want.

Rin.—Permit me to do a good action. Take this purse.

Old Man.—I do not choose to contract debts I shall not be able to pay; neither have I need of money. Adieu. Good night.

Thus he departed; nor did Rinaldo venture to detain him longer. He lay down again beneath the tree, and the next time the dogs barked, the morning dawned, and Cinthio arrived.

Cinthio.—Captain, what ails you? Why do you no longer continue with your people? You are grown fond of solitude, and fall out with us all.

Rin.—I have fallen out with myself, Cinthio. I know not what is the matter with me.

Cin.—Altaverde says you are in love.

Rin.—And so I am.

Cin.—Well; that is no misfortune.

Rin.—Four days ago I was taking a ramble through a small valley, where I saw a maid. Ah, Cinthio, she was an angel. She was gathering berries; I addressed her, and she talked with me as Innocence talks with Vice. Our people then came up, and I was obliged to leave her. Since that time I have never seen her, nor do I know who she is or where she lives.

Cin.—Then forget her.

Rin.—That is impossible.

Cin.—Man can do whatever he resolves to do.

Rin.—That is not true; otherwise I would become an honest man.

Cin.—Discourage not our people with these thoughts. Cast up your own account of evil when you please, but keep it to yourself.

Rinaldo said no more, but silently lay down beneath the tree, and at length went to sleep. When he awoke the sun was risen, the storm was past, the clouds dispersed, and Cinthio had been joined by two more of their party. They sat with him round the fire, and were preparing chocolate.

Cin.—Good morning, captain.

The others.—Good morning.

Rin.—I thank you. Give me a dish of chocolate.

Paolo.—'Tis extremely good.

Girolamo.—True Spanish chocolate. Altaverde sends you word that we have taken the mules. There are three of them; they were loaded with the baggage of a Neapolitan prince, and were going to Florence if we had not changed their destination. The booty, however, was not great.

Rin.—Were any men killed?

Gir.—The three muleteers. The rascals might have discovered us, and there are more muleteers in the world. Altaverde is dividing the plunder; he found this little case in one of the packages, and sends it to you.

Rinaldo opened it, and beheld the portrait of a beautiful girl, in the habit of a nun, and on the reverse that of a young man in uniform. The setting was not rich, but very tasty.

Soon after came Altaverde with a numerous troop of Rinaldo's party, who pitched their tents, made a fire, and cooked their dinner; after which they sang, danced, drank, and played.

Rinaldo concerted with Altaverde new measures of safety; and when the troop divided to take their respective posts, Rinaldo crossed the mountains into another small valley, where he laid himself down under a tree by the side of a fountain.

Here Altaverde brought him a paper relative to the division of the spoil, which he signed, and towards noon returned to his joyous companions, where a grand feast waited his arrival.

"Captain," said Girolamo, "your people observe that you are unhappy, and are anxious to know what has befallen you. Perhaps you wish for something we can procure you; if so, it shall be obtained, even should we purchase it with our lives. But if it is mere caprice or low spirits that disturb you, we beg you to drive them away, and not to make us out of humour with you also."

Rinaldo having for a few moments silently cast his eyes around the company that encircled him, at length addressed them in these words: "Have you read the declaration of the republics of Venice, Genoa, and Lucca? It has been publicly proclaimed; a price is set on my head."

"Heed it not, captain!" they all exclaimed with one accord. "No man w

"Who will dare to touch a hair of your head," said Girolamo, "while we

And as he said this he waved his sabre. The rest followed his example. "Our life and blood, captain, are yours as long as we have breath."

Altaverde now showed the partition paper, and each took his share with perfect content. After dinner they again played, sang, danced, and made merry.

As Rinaldo was lying under a tree, Florilla, and Amazonian of his troop, came up to him, seated herself by him, and began to clean her pistols.

Flo.—The price, captain, that has been set upon your head, is not the only cause of your dejection. A man like you trembles not for distant dangers. I doubt not the cause is much nearer home.

Rin.—What do you mean?

Flo.—I cannot be mistaken. The seat of your complaint, I believe, is your heart.

Rin.—Doubtless, many things oppress me there.

Flo.—Half a year ago 'twas so with me.

Rin.—Half a year ago?

Flo.—But now 'tis past. At that time I was foolishly in love with you.

Rin.—With me?

Flo.—I thought you must have perceived it.

As she said this she threw down the pistols and arose. "I absolutely thought," added she, "that I must be the captain's sweetheart;" and thus saying she left him.

Rinaldo's eyes pursued her steps. He then arose from his uneasy resting-place, and immediately gave the signal appointed for calling his people together.

"It is my intention," said he to them, "to remove to the mountains of Albonigo. You will therefore strike your tents, call in the out-post, and at night halt in the valley of St James's Chapel. To-morrow, at noon, you will be in the plains of the Four Hills of La Cera. If my plan succeed we shall strike a bold stroke."

Upon this they all huzzaed for joy, and packed up their baggage. The posts were called in, and Girolamo set forward with the van. Then followed Altaverde with the main body, and Cinthio brought up the rear. What route Rinaldo meant to take no man knew.

He took his guitar and his arms, and, accompanied by two dogs, went to the spot whither the old man was gone the preceding night.

He soon found a footpath, and when the lengthened shadows marked the approach of evening, he perceived through the trees a small cottage near the ridge of a mountain; to this he directed his steps, and before he reached it saw the old man above spoken of grubbing up roots.

They saluted each other, and seemed mutually embarrassed. At length the old man, endeavouring to collect himself, inquired, "Have you not yet found the great road?"

"I have not been seeking it," replied Rinaldo. "I only sought for your abode to ask you for a night's lodging. If you deny my request and refuse me your protection, I shall remain as you found me last night in the open air."

Old Man.—You may pass the night here, but you will be very ill accommodated.

Rin.—They who can rest at all are always accommodated.

Old Man.—A bed of hay——

Rin.—I am not very nice; and, as you saw, I was harder lodged last night. My unhappy fate——

Old Man.—What brings you into these solitudes?

Rin.—The consequences of an unfortunate moment.

Old Man.—Perhaps you have killed your antagonist in an affair of honour, as it is called?

Rin.—Excuse my answering that question.

Old Man.—If you can take up with what you will find, you may follow me.

Rinaldo now accompanied him in silence till they arrived at the hermitage, where he was shown into a small but neat and clean apartment. A couple of tables and a few chairs were all its furniture. On one of the tables lay a Latin Bible, on which stood a crucifix; and on the other a piece of netting, which Rinaldo immediately observed; but it presently occurred to him that it was possible the old man might himself sometimes net. Meanwhile the old man removed the work, as he observed that his guest seemed to consider it with uncommon attention. Rinaldo, however, did not venture to ask whether it was his own work; and the old man for awhile left the room.

He returned with a lighted lamp; and Rinaldo then drew two bottles of wine from his

pockets, and set them on the table, saying—"When we have drunk a glass of wine together, we shall be better acquainted."

"An acquaintance," replied the old man, "that is formed between two honest men by a bottle of wine, often becomes as hearty as the wine itself, which is the most heart-inspiring liquor Heaven ever gave to mortals. It will be the best part of our supper, for I can only offer you bread and cheese, some butter, and a few melons, which I gathered this morning."

"'Tis enough, my good friend, for us two—or even had we a third to join us," said Rinaldo."

Upon which the old man quickly answered—"A third! is any one else then———"

"No one with me. But here, perhaps———"

"Not a soul lives here but myself, my little dog, and a pair of turtle doves."

Rinaldo was silent. But the old man asked—"How came you to think of finding any one here besides me?"

Rinaldo smiled, opened the table-drawer, and showed him the netting.

"Ah," answered the old man; "yes, that netting does indeed belong to a third person, but one that does not live here; she forgot it this morning, and left it here."

Upon this the old man left his guest, and went to bring in their frugal repast.

Meanwhile Rinaldo examined the apartment more particularly, and opened a door that led into a small room. Here he saw the old man's bed, over which hung a pair of pistols, between two paintings in oil. He took the lamp, examined the paintings, and immediately hastened back.

The pictures were of the very same persons of which miniatures had been brought him that morning as booty (the nun and the officer), to which they were so exactly alike, that it was impossible he could be mistaken. Thus he left the chamber, and returned pensive to his place.

The old man, whom we shall call Donato, now brought supper, and as soon as he had pronounced a short prayer, seated himself with his guest at table.

When they had both eaten heartily, emptied the first bottle, and opened the second, a conversation, by no means uninteresting, arose.

Rin.—Let us drink the health of the aforesaid third person, be she here or not.

Donato.—With all my heart; but here she certainly is not.

Rin.—I do not mean to doubt your word.

Don.—And yet I perceive you do not believe it.

Rin.—And of what importance is it?

Don.—To me, of much. I would not pass for a man that would assert a falsehood. At a farm, about a league off, beyond the mountain, there lives a maid, who sometimes calls here, and who left her netting this morning.

Rin.—Is she the farmer's daughter?

Don.—His foster-child, not his own. She is a good-natured, innocent girl, and I love her as a father loves his offspring; for she is worthy of my esteem, and of that of the whole world. Her health, with all my heart.

They ceased, and drank. Then followed a pause. At length the old man, whom the wine made garrulous, renewed the conversation.

Don.—May I ask you of what country you are?

Rin.—I am a Roman.

Don.—A Roman! born in Rome itself?

No; in the neighbouring country.

Don.—Countryman, your hand; I am also a Roman born; yet I am by no means proud of my birth. 'Tis an ungrateful country.

Rin.—Have you experienced it?

Don.—I have been very ill-used. Even the impartial tribunal of the Ruota and their sentences could not———But enough—I live here in peace, and forgive my enemies. Rome no longer produces men. She knows not how to support her dignity, and her inhabitants are licentious, cruel, and unjust. How have they treated you?

Rin.—My misfortunes were the consequence of my errors.

Don.—That would be my consolation, could I thus accuse myself. But I have suffered innocently.

Rinaldo was about to reply, when they clearly distinguished the voices of men before the hermitage, who constantly approached, and at length knocked at the door.

"What is that?" exclaimed Rinaldo, with astonishment.

Donato quietly opened the window, and inquired who was there.

"Open the door," cried a voice from without.

"There are armed men at the door," said Donato. "They may be police officers, or soldiers. If you have reason to fear such visitors, go into that room, and so out of the window into the garden; then get over the hedge, and go straight forward till you come to some rocks, among which, to the left, you may conceal yourself in a grotto. I will open the door presently, that nobody may suspect anything."

Rinaldo now called his dogs, and went into the other chamber, while Donato opened the door to the strangers.

Six armed men entered, and followed him into his parlour; meanwhile Rinaldo overheard what passed.

"Who are you?"—"I am the hermit Donato."

"Are you alone?"—"I live entirely alone."

"Do you know us?'—"How is it possible?"

"Do you fear us?"—"Even were you police officers, an innocent man could not fear you."

"You mistake us; we are no spies for justice to lean on when she is lame. Where is your money?"—"In this purse. Here it is."

"Go to the devil with your paltry pence! Give us more!"—"'Tis all the money I possess."

"We do not believe you."—"'Tis the truth."

"You are no beggar: there stands your wine, you rogue. Bring us more wine!"—"'Tis a present, and I have no more."

"Blood and thunder! Here two people have been eating. You are not alone. Knock the rascal down; he has told us a lie."—"I had a visitor ——"

"Bind the old sinner, and make him confess."—"Be merciful, and ——"

"More money!"—"Take whatever you can find: money I have none."

"You obstinate villain! won't you confess, then?"

Upon this the robbers fell upon Donato, who cried aloud for help, though without knowing whence it could come; when Rinaldo suddenly opened the door, and, taking out a pistol, demanded, in a voice of thunder, "What is your business here?"

"Heavens! our captain!" exclaimed one of the gang, while they all took off their hats, and released the trembling hermit, who tottered to a chair, repeating, in a broken voice—"The captain!"

"Are these your deeds of heroism?" continued Rinaldo. "Dare you to disgrace my name with such actions? Are you indeed of Rinaldini's band? Have you such necessities as to force the last penny from the hand of poverty? Is this your bravery, to bind an unarmed man? Which is the villain that first laid hands on this feeble old man?"

A profound silence now ensued, after which Rinaldo continued, with increasing vehemence, "Which was the villain? Name him, or I will shoot the first that stands before me."

"'Twas Paolo," murmured the man that stood next to Rinaldo: upon which, without another word, Rinaldo instantly fired at him, and broke his arm. Paolo fell; but his companions continued motionless.

"And why,' said Rinaldo, with a look of rage, "have you departed from your route?"

"We were in search of you, captain," replied one of them.

"Is it your business to dodge me wherever I go?" continued Rinaldo. "Go, join the main body. You know our laws; you know what you have done, and the punishment you deserve. Take with you this base fellow, who belongs not to Rinaldini's company, and wait my coming, and your sentence to-morrow."

Upon this the robbers departed, carrying Paolo with them, while Donato remained silent and trembling in his chair.

Rinaldo now approached him, took his hand, and pressing it, said, "Be not alarmed, good old man!"

"*Open that closet,*" *cried* Donato, in a broken voice, "and give me the little bottle of

drops;" which Rinaldo having done, he poured out a spoonful, at Donato's request, and gave it him. Donato swallowed it, and seemed to come to himself.

Don.—So you are Rinaldini himself?

Rin.—I am.

Don.—I am indebted to you for my life, and yet cannot rejoice in your acquaintance.

Rin.—What have you to fear?

Don.—Your name alone is frightful, and yourself are terrible.

Rin.—Alas! that it should be so!

Don.—Your actions here before my eyes fill my heart with fear and terror.

Rin.—And mine with grief. Oh, that I could have spared myself and you this scene! but you know not these horrible beings. Fear and terror alone can restrain them.

Don.—And are you not yourself afraid of such monsters?

Rin.—Even if I feared them, I must not let them have the least suspicion of it.

Don.—Unhappy man! into what a connection have you fallen!

Rin.—Friend, the goodness of your heart unites me to you, for you are worthy of my confidence. You shall know my whole story, but not now; for it would affect you too much, and you need repose. Let me lead you to bed. I will await the morning in a chair.

Rinaldo now conducted Donato to bed, and wrapping himself up in his cloak, threw himself into a chair. It was not, however, till long after midnight that he fell asleep, and he awoke with the first rays of the morning sun.

"I am very ill," said Donato, with a sigh. when Rinaldo approached his bed to inquire after his health. "I wished to be of service to you," said Rinaldo, "and came to give you protection; but am the innocent cause of your present illness, which I assure you gives me the greatest pain. Do not, however, take my good intention ill."—"By no means," replied Donato, in a faint voice; "on the contrary, I am thankful to Providence for sending you hither, otherwise I should most probably have been murdered."

He then requested him to fetch some bottles of physic out of the closet, and having directed him how to mix it, swallowed a spoonful, after which a soft sleep soon closed his eyes.

Rinaldo now went out to taste the morning air, and with expanding heart admired the beauties of the rising sun. With majestic glory the king of day advanced amid a blaze of light, rising above the misty summits of the mountains, and darted his genial rays into the narrow vale where Donato dwelt. The birds celebrated the magnificent return of day with a hymn of joy; and Rinaldo, in pensive mood, covered his face and sighed. "Even on me the golden sun," said he, "bestows his light; on me, as on all men, whether good or bad; on me, to whom his beneficent rays are as the lightning's flash, threatening destruction to my guilty conscience."

Rinaldo now heard a rustling near him in the hedge, when, raising his eyes, the beauteous maid he had seen and talked with a few days before, but whom he had not since met, approached him.

Struck and embarrassed with this incident, both stood silent during a few moments, till at length Rinaldo addressed her in the following words: "Are you not the virtuous maid of the neighbouring farm-house, who sometimes visits the hermit Donato?"

Aurelia.—I am.

Rinaldo.—And what is your name?

Aur. Aurelia; and you are the man who spoke with me a few days ago as I was gathering berries?

Rin.—The same; the friend of your friend Donato.

Aur.—And where is he?

Rin.—He is asleep.

Aur.—Asleep so late! he must surely be ill.

Rin.—Indeed he is not well.

Aur.—Good God! what ails him?

Rin.—A trifling indisposition; he will soon be better; he will be better when he has slept; we must not disturb him.

Aur.—I will go and tell my father. Poor Donato is old and weak, and must want assistance.

Rin.—We will give him whatever assistance he needs.

Aur.—We? I do not know you well enough to stay here in your company.

Rin.—Be not afraid, fair maiden.

Aur.—You are a stranger and——

Rin.—I am the friend of Donato.

Aur.—I must hear that from his own mouth.

Rin.—You shall.

Aur.—Well, I will wait for his confirmation; but till then I must not stay here alone with you.

Rin.—Of what are you afraid?

Aur.—Afraid? I——

Rin.—I pledge my word of honour and my most solemn oath, that you have nothing to fear.

Aur.—Who are you then?

Rin.—A traveller.

Aur.—And yet stay so long in this place?

Rin.—I am much pleased with the situation.

Aur.—Among the mountains?

Rin.—Among the mountains where dwells so lovely a maid.

Aur.—If you mean me, I live beyond the mountain.

Rin.—Yes; Donato told me so.

Aur.—Have you, then, spoken with him of me? How came you to fall on such a subject?

Rin.—Through your netting.

Aur.—Aha!

A rustling was now heard in the hedge; and Rinaldo looking towards it, Cinthio gave him the wink. Aurelia hastened into the hermitage.

"Captain," said Cinthio, "your presence among us is necessary, there is an alarm."—"Wait for me," replied Rinaldo, and instantly entered the hermitage. "My dear girl," said he to Aurelia, "stay with Donato."

Aur.—That I certainly shall, since he is ill.

Rin.—And when he awakes tell him I shall soon return.

Aur.—Whither, then, are you going?

Rin.—My servant calls my attention to my baggage, where a trifling accident demands my presence. Farewell, dear girl, and forget me not; be kind to my memory.

Aur.—How do you know that I am not so already.

Rin.—Oh, yes.

Aur.—Who told you so?

Rin.—My heart.

Aur.—Believe it not. Farewell.

Rinaldo pressed her hand, and hurrying out, accompanied Cinthio to the spot where his people had passed the night.

"'Tis well you are come, captain," cried several voices, confusedly. "We would know——"—"Be silent!" thundered Rinaldo. "Girolamo, read the fifth and sixth articles of our laws aloud."

This being done, Rinaldo related the scene he had witnessed at the hermitage, and concluded with a proclamation to this effect, "Now let our compact and our laws decide."

"Pardon! pardon! pardon for Paolo!" cried several voices.—Rinaldo was silent.

Paolo, who lay on the ground, and had recently had his wound bound up, cried out for pardon in a faint voice.—Rinaldo was still silent.

Girolamo now went up to him, and begged that Paolo might be pardoned.—Rinaldo made no reply.

Florilla now went up to him, and said, "Captain, in the name of all the pangs I have suffered for you, I beg for Paolo's pardon, for on him I have fixed my affections, in the hope of suppressing and exterminating my passion for you."—"Like you," said Rinaldo, "I am subject to the law, and have no power to pardon him."—"Be no longer subject to the law," cried they all; "you shall be our legislator, and shall have power to pardon."—"If that be your will——"—"We swear it."—"Then be Paolo pardoned, and his companions also; but *with one condition*——"—"Pronounce it."—"That this be the first and last occasion on

which such conduct can be forgiven."—"Be it so."—"And further, I adjudge that Paolo and his companions, who maltreated that venerable old man, shall give him two goats, two barrels of wine, and a dozen fowls."—"Bravo! bravo! Long live our noble captain!"

Thus, amid rejoicings, music, and acclamations, Rinaldo now took his breakfast before his tent; and having attended awhile to the amusements of his people, signed various papers at his desk, and written and sealed some instructions, he directed the whole corps to be assembled. They soon formed a large circle around him, and waited in silent expectation, till Rinaldo, who continued sitting, thus began:—"Here, Girolamo, I give you an order, which you will open at Borgo, where the state of affairs will determine whether or not you are to proceed to Arezzo. The business that calls you thither requires prudence, which, however, to you I have no occasion particularly to recommend. You, Florilla, I send to Bibiena, where you will endeavour to learn how we are spoken of. Nicolo and Sebastiano will cross the woods to Bosina. To you, Amadeo, I give charge of the woods of Anghiarto. Altaverde will take six or eight men with him, and endeavour to secure the person of the mayor of Brancolino. These orders contain the particulars of that expedition. Towards evening, Mattheo will remove with twenty men to the south mountains, and take possession of the pass of Caprile. Alsetto will remain here with thirty men till further orders. Cinthio will choose twelve men, and draw off to the left, into the poplar valley of Oriolo, near the pass among the rocks. Here is the watchword. The detached corps will keep as close together as possible, during three days, in the western plains before the forest of Marcia. And now let these plans be executed without delay."

All were now in motion, and Rinaldo, having loaded his two great dogs with provisions and medicines, returned to the hermitage.

Aurelia was no longer there; but a young peasant boy, a son of her friend the neighbouring farmer, stood by Donato's bed, who was awake, and said he was better.

Donato now sent away his young attendant, desiring him to fetch some wood, and Rinaldo gave the old man a few spoonfuls of the corroborative physic, which he had with him, but did not venture to enter on a subject to which, however, at length Donato himself led the discourse.

Don.—I hope soon to be quite re-established.

Rin.—'Tis what I most sincerely wish.

Don.—You are come perhaps to take leave of me.

Rin.—Do you imagine so?

Don.—I hope it. Now I know who you are, I would not that any one should know I am acquainted with you. You know the world, and that all men depend on the opinion entertained of them by others. I thank you for the preservation of my life; but no man shall be informed by me that I have given lodging to the dreaded Rinaldini, on whose head so high a price has been set. Aurelia has made me her confidant.

Rin.—Has she so?

Don.—You ought not to have said to her what you have.

Rin.—But if I confess to you that I am in love with her——

Don.—Is it possible? Can you expect she will return your love when she learns who you are?

Rin.—And why need she know it?

Don.—Would you then deceive her?

Rin.—How? Suppose I renounce my way of life, and——

Don.—'Tis too late.

Rin.—I will tell her——

Don.—You must not see her more.

Rin.—How?

Don.—She is about to take the veil.

Rin.—Who has——?

Don.—I have brought it about.

Rin.—Indeed! Then be assured I will bring about the contrary.

Don.—What will you do?

Rin.—That you shall learn.

Don.—Do nothing that is dishonourable or base. If you really love Aurelia, how can you

wish to make her unhappy? But you do not love her with the purity with which she deserves to be loved. You cannot love her in an honourable way, and your passion is a crime. Aurelia must be rescued from your sight; or would you take her with you amid your lawless band, and deliver her up to that justice which will surely sooner or later overtake you as an accomplice? Is it not enough that you are what you are? Then leave the girl to live and die with honour. If you leave me soon, you will confer on me an obligation, for I expect several visitors.

Rin.—Not through fear, for that is a stranger to my breast; through complaisance I will. But let me first ask you whom do the portraits represent that hang over your bed?

Don.—They are my friends, and persons of quality.

Rin.—The one in the dress of a nun, and the other in uniform?

Don.—From this very man, whose portrait you see, I expect a visit. He is going to Florence, and his mules with their baggage have been taken from him on the mountains, probably by your people. The drivers were shot, except one, who, being very young, ran away. He took refuge with Aurelia's foster-father, where my friend, whose portrait you see, now is.

Rin.—If he is your friend, give him this, for perhaps he would not willingly lose it.

So saying, he gave Donato the case containing the portraits he had received out of the booty found with the mules. Donato took it, opened the case, and no sooner beheld the portraits than he kissed them both.

Don.—You have made me a present of great value, which the right owner shall have again.

Rin.—And will you not tell me his name?

Don.—For why?

Rin.—Perhaps I may be of service to him for your sake.

Donato was about to reply, when the peasant boy suddenly came in, crying—"They are coming! they are coming!" And immediately after entered the very person who was the subject of their conversation. He was dressed in uniform, and bore a cross of the order of Malta. With him came two peasants belonging to the farmer, and the brother of the latter.

The stranger cast a piercing look at Rinaldo, who returned it in such a manner, that the former turned his eyes away; then giving Donato his hand, and saying—"A speedy recovery," he departed from the hermitage.

The chevalier of Malta, however, hurried after him, and came to the door of the hermitage as Rinaldo happened to look back, and perceiving him, stopped. Upon which the chevalier went up to him, and said, "I believe, sir, I have had the pleasure of seeing you somewhere before."

Rin.—That is very possible.

Chevalier.—Are you not the person who called himself Donato's friend, and spoke this morning with a young woman named Aurelia?

Rin.—I am.

Chev.—You are a traveller?

Rin.—I am.

Chev.—May I ask your name?

Rin.—You shall hear it when you have told me yours.

Chev.—My name is neither a secret nor matter of suspicion.

Rin.—Who imagines it to be so?

Chev.—I am the Prince of Roccella.

Two of Rinaldo's people now brought the goats, the fowls, and the wine, which Paolo was sentenced to give, as a peace-offering, to the hermit, and which Rinaldo delivered to the young peasant, saying, "These are for my friend Donato; he knows of them already. You may tell him by and by that they are all arrived."

He then turned again to the prince, who was waiting for his answer, and to know his name.

Rin.—If you come from the farm-house where Aurelia lives, tell me whether she is still there?

Prince.—I know not how——

Rin.—How I came to ask that question when you were expecting to hear my name?

Prince.—In truth that was my meaning.

Rin.—If possible, excuse me telling my name; a false one I ought not to give you, and my true name——

Prince.—'Tis impossible I can mistake. I saw you about half a year ago at Florence, under the name of the Marquis of Pepoli; did I not? We talked of the German houses, and you grew warm when a story was told of that notorious robber Ridaldini, which tended much to his prejudice.

One of Rinaldo's people now gave him the wink very significantly. He understood the signal, and approaching the prince with great confidence, said, "Know, then, I am Rinaldini himself," and instantly hastened away.

Rinaldo now inquired of his comrade what was the matter, and received for answer, "Cinthio hesitates to approach the Poplar Vale near Oriolo, as a caravan of travellers have taken up their quarters there." Upon this Rinaldo hastened to Cinthio, and found him and his party among the bushes of a pleasant hill, where he learnt from himself what had been reported to him, and after some reflection, gave the following orders: "Wheel off with your people to the right, pursue the high road, and keep the road from Oriolo to the convent of San Benedetto constantly in sight. If you meet with a beautiful young woman in a carriage, stop it, and carry off the girl without further ceremony; and at dusk we meet again on this very spot."

Upon this he disguised his face with brown paint, dressed himself as a hunter, and took with him one of his companions, called Severo, also dressed as a hunter, and armed like him with a double-barrelled gun, some pocket pistols, and a hanger. Thus equipped, and accompanied by his dogs, they proceeded to the Poplar Vale.

When they came to the hill that commanded the valley, they perceived a tent pitched, and near it some mules grazing, and several men dispersed here and there, who seemed to be cooking their supper by a large fire they had lighted. Having observed them for some time, they perceived two ladies in the tent, and at a small distance from it unloaded baggage, and the muleteers lying near their charge.

About forty paces from this spot ran a murmuring brook, hurrying down the hill into this beautiful valley; and hither came a fine active youth belonging to the company, with an empty vessel to draw water. When the youth saw Rinaldo, he screamed, and would have fled, had not Rinaldo called to him, saying, "Stop, young man; do you belong to yonder company?"—"Yes, I do belong to them," said the boy, terrified and hesitating.

"And who are those ladies in the tent?"—"The Marchioness of Altanare and her sister. We are come from San Leo, and are going to Florence."

Rinaldo gave his companion the wink, and they both went up to the tent, when the attendants of the marchioness saluted and stared at them, and her equerry came out to them, while the ladies listened, at the entrance, to the following conversation: "Whence are you my good friends?" Rinaldo replied, "I am the forester of Sorsina, and am pursuing a bye-road with my servant. On seeing your company, I felt a strong desire to know who you are, and so I came to give you a hint to be upon your guard, for Rinaldini's troop are now among these mountains."—"Oh, heavens!" cried one of the ladies, "I am dreadfully alarmed!"

"And why so?" said the equerry. "We are numerous enough to oppose force to force."—"Humph!" said Rinaldo, smiling, "that will avail but little, for Rinaldidi's men are very devils."

Lady.—Heavens! why are those banditti suffered to commit their depredations so quietly and so undisturbed?

Rin.—Because men are afraid of them.

Equerry.—How strong may they be?

Rin.—Who can tell their strength? Rinaldini is an outlaw, and a price by no means contemptible is set upon his head. Between ourselves, I have been above a week in search of him, in hopes of gaining the reward; if he comes within reach of my gun, he shall certainly never escape.

Equ.—Do you know his person then?

Rin.—He has been very fully and accurately described.

Equ.—In fact, 'tis said he has no courage at all himself, and that his people are obliged to do all for him.

Rin.—So, then, they must all be fools.

Equ.—And you think he is now here in the neighbourhood?

Rin.—I am certain of it. We are eighteen of us, and all hunters, and good marksmen; we are constantly watching for him, and have agreed if we take him to divide the reward.

Lady.—And what are you to receive, then, when you take the villain?

Rin.—In Venice, Genoa, Lucca, and Florence, money will be paid for his head, making together a sum of three or four thousand sequins, so that each of us will receive something. The times are very bad; 'tis certain, however, we run the risk of our lives, and some of us may bite the dust.

Lady.—The troops ought to be sent out against the cut-purse.

Rin.—And so they have, madam, but without success; he is too cunning for them, and has hiding-holes where he keeps on the defensive. The militia of Lucca can tell a pretty story of that kind. Three hundred of them were driven over hill and dale by eighty men under Rinaldini's command. They had seventy men killed, and have never since dared to stir a step against them.

Lady.—'Tis really terrible to think what depredations such a vagabond may commit.

Rin.—'Tis very true. Besides, he is a very desperate fellow, and very often has adventures, even when quite alone, which would make you split your sides with laughing.

Lady.—I should like to see one of these adventures.

Rin.—Suppose you stood here quite off your guard, and near you your equerry and all your attendants collected round your tent; then holding one pistol to your breast with his left hand, and another with his right to your equerry (while his companion takes care of the rest of the company), he says, I demand your rings, your watches, and one hundred sequins. I am Rinaldini.

These words being accompanied with the action they described, the marchioness screamed, and the equerry almost fell backwards with surprise.

Equ.—Come, Mr Forester, no jokes, if you please.

Rin.—No, no; no joke, I assure you; I am quite serious, Mr Equerry.

Equ.—How?

Lady.—For God's sake!

Rin.—You wished to see a little of Rinaldini. You see him now.

Lady.—Are you really——

Rin.—I am Rinaldini. Now, no more preliminaries. I have complied with your wish, and you must comply with mine—that of possessing your watches, your rings, and the trifling sum of one hundred sequins. I will then give you a protection, on showing which none of my people will touch a hair of your head till you arrive at Florence.

Trembling from head to foot, the marchioness took off her rings, and delivered her watch and purse to Rinaldo, who said, "Have you seen enough of Rinaldini?" and departed. No one, however, was bold enough to pursue him.

Night drew in, and his company assembled at the appointed spot without having met with the expected carriage. At this Rinaldo appeared dejected, and, after taking one of his frugal suppers, lay down to rest beneath a poplar; where, having wrapped himself up in his cloak, he soon fell asleep. His companions lighted a fire, set two men to keep watch, and laid down to rest, after Severo had related to them Rinaldo's joke with the marchioness.

Towards morning they all arose with one accord, being awakened by repeated firings; and having instantly seized their arms, they heard a cry from the sentinels flying, "We are surrounded."—"Surrounded!" exclaimed Rinaldo. The sentinels now pointed to the neighbouring peaks and valleys, and arms glittered around them on all sides.

Severo.—Captain! what is to be done?

Rin.—Fight.

Severo.—That's of course. But we, a handful of men, and——

Rin.—We must draw hither as many of our party as we can. Alsetto, with his thirty men, is still encamped on the old ground, and here we are, twelve men strong. Blow the alarm-horns, and load your arms double.

The valleys now resounded with the horn, and the echoes gave back the sound. Again a horn was heard quite close to them, and presently Altaverde joined them with five of their friends.

"Comrades," cried they, "we are surrounded. Both militia and regular troops are moving towards us, and our friends Nero and Rispero have fallen into the hands of the militia."

"*Thunder and lightning!*" exclaimed Rinaldo. And immediately horns were heard at a

distance, then nearer and nearer, till at length they perceived Alsetto and his corps advancing towards them across the valley.

They were now forty-nine men strong, who all cried with one accord "Captain, let us attack!"

"Be it so," said Rinaldo; "only I would first learn where the militia are placed. Then we may easily cut our way through."

A few moments after he called to them to wheel to the left, and drew them off into the vale below.

They had marched a few hundred paces, when they saw a paper lying on the ground, which Altaverde took up and delivered to Rinaldo, who opened it, and read as follows:—

"In the name of the government, a free pardon is hereby offered to any one of Rinaldo's men who shall voluntarily quit his service and go over to the regular troops. And whosoever shall bring the head of Rinaldini, shall receive, besides his pardon, a reward of five hundred sequins."

Rinaldo then folded up the paper, saying, "Comrades, this paper promises you a free pardon, if you will go over to the troops, and put yourselves wholly and entirely in their power."

"And is it signed by the grand duke?" said Alsetto.

"By no man. 'Tis a scrap of paper, without date, place, or signature," replied Rinaldo.

"Then we should be the most credulous of fools," cried Altaverde, "to risk our lives at the mere demand of a subaltern officer. 'Tis written by some coward, who is afraid to fight us; and, had we yielded, nobody would have avowed this engagement. We should only have been made a jest of, and hung, as indeed we should justly deserve. Captain, tear it in pieces, and let us send it back to them as wadding from our guns. We will singe the writer's beard with his own treacherous promises."

"Comrades," said Rinaldo, "it is my opinion that we should advance towards the frontiers of the ecclesiastical state, and cut our way through the militia into the forest of Marle."

"Let us go! Let us march!" they all cried.

Thus they crossed the valley, and drew off towards the opposite hill. They had almost gone round it, and were very near the frontiers, when they fell in with a piquet of militia, whom they unexpectedly attacked with so much vigour that they drove them back. But presently after they met with a detachment of above a hundred and fifty men, rapidly advancing upon them.

"Comrades, cried Rinaldini, "now defend yourselves bravely! We are but three steps from the frontiers, and the woods are scarcely a hundred paces off. If we are taken alive we shall die upon the wheel or the gallows. Let us then rather die like the brave, sword in hand. If we are but courageous, we shall certainly cut our way through. Let us be bold and quick."

As he spoke these words, he gave the signal by firing a pistol, and rushed upon the enemy, and his companions followed his example. The fury with which the attack was made, at first threw their opponents into confusion, and at length they began to yield; when one of their officers reproached them with their cowardice, put himself at their head, and advanced into the hottest of the battle.

A dreadful slaughter now took place. Alsetto fell, fighting by the side of Rinaldo, and three of his companions with him. Altaverde, Cinthio, Severo, and Rinaldo still fought like lions. Musket-balls and sabres fell with the rapidity of a hail shower. Severo had his head cut open and fell, and twelve of the banditti were killed near him by musket-balls and sabres. Rinaldo, with his united forces, attacked the flanks of the regulars, and at length fortunately reached the frontiers, though separated from his men. Here he was attacked by two dragoons, one of whom he shot, and the other took to flight.

Tired and fainting he reached the wood, and concealing himself in a thick bush, sank down on the earth, with a panting heart and almost senseless. He did not come to himself till mid-day, and then felt himself much oppressed by a most burning thirst. He therefore roused himself and penetrated further into the forest till he came to a fountain, where he lay down and refreshed himself. On examining his pockets, he found two biscuits, which he swallowed with the greatest avidity, and then creeping into a bush began to reflect. Hunger, however,

soon drew him from his retreat; he got up, examined his arms, filled his bottle with water, and set forward. He had not gone far before he heard footsteps; and having listened for some time, perceived a peasant, with a basket, walking quietly along. He therefore advanced to meet him, accosted him, and inquired whether he had anything to eat?

The peasant, having first stared at him with surprise and curiosity, informed him he was carrying some cheese and sausages to the neighbouring town. Rinaldo offered to purchase them—took as much of his provisions as his pouch would hold and paid for them, without treating about the price; after which the peasant, seeing that he was so well paid for his provisions, added a loaf, asked for by Rinaldo, but which the former had brought to eat on the road.

"And what news have you?" said Rinaldo. "This morning," replied the peasant, "there has been much blood shed upon the frontiers."

"How so?"—"The troops of Tuscany have caught that thief Rinaldini."

"So, they have caught him, have they?"—"Yes; though both he and his men defended themselves like devils. But they were all shot or cut in pieces."

"All?"—"Every one of them."

"And Rinaldini himself, too?"—"Rinaldini himself."

"That is very good news."

"Ay, very good. But at any rate the thief would have been hung soon. 'Tis a pity he was not taken alive, and that he died so honourable a death. However, the rascal is sure to go to the devil."

"Ay?"—"Ay; for he died without absolution under a load of mortal sins."

"Indeed!"

"Either of us would have died with more peace and honour, should we not?"—"Most surely, for we are neither of us thieves."

"Well, God bless you—if you are not going my way." Thus saying, the peasant left him; and as soon as he was out of sight Rinaldo entered the wood and satisfied his hunger.

After a short refreshing sleep he again arose, and proceeded some leagues farther into the forest, till at length he unexpectedly came to an open place a few hundred paces in circumference, where before him, on a hill that rose in the middle of it, were the ruins of a castle. He now looked around, but could not perceive a living soul. A deathlike silence reigned over the whole scene; nor was a single bird heard among the trees, though he thought he perceived footsteps in the grass.

He now advanced to the ruins, and entered a spacious court, covered with high grass. Here he sat down on some fragments of statues, in front of a ruined colonnade, and abandoned himself to his reflections, till a sudden noise alarmed him. It was a roebuck that rushed by; and Rinaldo, rising, approached a flight of steps leading to the upper part of the castle. Having ascended these, he came to a large hall, where his footsteps loudly re-echoed; but though he listened after every step, all was solitude, and no signs of a living inhabitant appeared.

This hall led to a spacious apartment, on the farther side of which were two wooden doors, fastened with iron bolts; here he stood and listened, but heard nothing, except the noise of his own breathing; and though he knocked at both of them, the same silence still continued. At length, having drawn back the bolts of one of the doors, which creaked upon its hinges, he entered into an empty room, which he immediately left. In like manner he opened the other door, and here also found an empty apartment. He therefore again bolted the doors, and returned by the way he came.

He now perceived, in a corner of the hall, a small opening, which led to another empty room; this led to a second, and that to a third. Here he suddenly trod on wood, and perceived he was on a trap-door fastened by bolts, which he opened, and looked down into a dark and deep place, and a small stone staircase. He then carefully closed the door, and returned by the way he came to the court-yard.

Evening now beginning to draw in fast, he looked around for a tree to pass the night in, and chose a majestic oak, amid whose thick foliage he endeavoured to repose.

Having, however, passed the night with scarcely any sleep, Rinaldo left his uneasy lodging *when day* began to dawn, and set forward in search of water, which he soon found. As soon

as he had quenched his thirst, and filled his bottle, he advanced still further, cutting marks in the trees, that he might again find his way back to the ruins.

Towards noon he approached the road that traversed the forest, and reposed, at a small distance from it, under a thick bush.

He had not lain long before he heard the voices of men, and the tinkling of mule-bells, which seemed constantly to approach; till at length a company of gipsies appeared, consisting of three men, two old women, and a couple of young women, four children, a mule with baggage, two dogs, and some animals for show.

These people seemed to know the place, for they bent their course into the forest, and went towards the fountain which Rinaldo had just left. The dogs scarcely perceived him before they set up a dreadful cry, and flew furiously at him. One of the men seized his fusil, which lay on the paniers, and the other two drew their stilettoes.

Rinaldo now let loose his dogs, which instantly darted forward out of the bush towards the strangers.

"Holloa! who are you?" cried one of the gipsies.

"Call in your dogs," cried Rinaldo, "or I will shoot them!"

They called in the dogs, and the women held them fast while Rinaldo approached them, and said, in a resolute tone, "We can hardly have any cause to fear each other."

"Who are you?" inquired the gipsies again.

"A man," replied Rinaldo, "who knows not what it is to fear."

Gipsy Man.—I know not what to make of you.

Rin.—Think of me as you please; but give me a glass of liquor, if you have any.

Gipsy Man.—You shall have some when you have paid for it.

Rin.—That I will do.

Gipsy Man.—But——

Rin.—Come, pour it out.

Gipsy Man.—You look, to me, like one that—that had done something for which he was afraid of being taken up.

Rin.—That is impossible. Come, pour out.

Gipsy Man.—Yes, yes, you are certainly one of Rinaldini's people.

Rin.—Of what consequence is Rinaldini to either of us?

Gipsy.—To me of great consequence.

Rin.—To you?

Gipsy Man.—Yes, very great.

Rin.—How great?

Gipsy Man.—At least to the amount of two thousand sequins.

Rin.—How so?

Gipsy Man.—If I could but deliver up his head——

Rin.—Indeed! But you are too late.

Gipsy Man.—Too late! I fancy he will think it is always time enough to be hung.

Rin.—He will not think so now.

Gipsy Man.—Why not?

Rin—Because he was killed in his last battle with the troops of Tuscany.

Gipsy Man.—And how do you know that?

Rin.—Because I was there.

Gipsy Man.—By heavens, I guessed it! Didn't I?

Rin.—Guessed what?

Gipsy Man.—That you were one of his people.

Rin.—Say that again, and, by heavens, I'll split your skull in two! I'll let you know who I am; I am the forester of the next frontier town, and was ordered out against that thief Rinaldini, with all my people. We had very hot work; and now we have destroyed him you treat me as if——

Gipsy Man.—Well, well, I beg pardon. A man may——

Rin.—Come, less argument, and more liquor. Well, that is once, now for number two. Now show me your passports; we have lately had very strict orders to take up all such vagabonds as you.

A Woman.—'Tis excellent liquor! entirely at your honour's service.

Rin.—I take no presents, and know my duty.

Gipsy Woman.—Why not? Do let me——

Rin.—Come, once more, old woman!

Gipsy Woman.—With all my heart, good Mr Forester.

Rin.—Is that your daughter, old Shrivelskin?

Gipsy Woman.—The little one is; the tall one is a relation, a poor fatherless and motherless girl. Come hither, child; she is named after her godmother Rosalia, is a good Christian seven years old, and has an excellent heart. Shall I pour you out another glass?

Rin.—With all my heart.

Gipsy Woman.—Rosalia, give Mr Forester a piece of rice-cake.

Rosalia. Here, here, forester; much good may it do you!

Rin.—Hark ye, my maid, are you really christened?

Gipsy Woman.—Heaven forgive your disbelief! Yes, indeed, she was regularly christened at Macerata, as her certificate will prove.

Ros.—Yes, certainly I was; I was.

Rin.—Now what am I indebted to you?

Gipsy Woman.—Oh, by his holiness! not a doit: we will not take any money of you, good Mr Forester.

Rin.—I cannot accept presents. Come, out with your passports! What have you in these paniers? What the deuce! how came you by these large wax candles? You must certainly have stolen them?

Gipsy Woman.—God forbid, Mr Forester! What do you take us for? Stolen, indeed! No, we paid good hard money for them.

Rin.—And what use do you make of these church candles?

Gipsy Woman.—By night, Mr Forester, when the weather is dark and stormy, in the woods, and when——

Rin.—I will buy two of them.

Gipsy Woman.—They are at your service.

Rin.—I will also buy your bread.

Gipsy Woman.—With all my heart.

Rin.—Now reckon what I owe you. Come, show me your passports! Will you sell me the whole bottle of liquor?

Gipsy Woman.—Certainly.

Gipsy Man.—Mr Forester is a good customer.

Rin.—Yes, I will buy everything that pleases me. I will buy this girl, if you will sell her, and she has no objection.

Ros.—In what capacity?

Rin.—As my housekeeper. I want just such a girl as you.

Ros.—If I can earn my wages, I will go with you immediately.

Rin.—I mean so.

Gipsy Woman.—You shall have her. I will sell her for three ducats.

Rin.—I will only give two.

Gipsy Woman.—Well, take her; but with one condition, that you shall not ask us for our passports.

Rin.—Aha! very well. But beware that you do not fall into the hands of the militia, for they are out to-day.

Gipsy Woman.—We shall soon get out of the wood.

Rin—I would advise you to do so. Here is the money for the girl; and here are a couple of pauls* for my reckoning.

Gipsy Woman.—Thank you, Mr Forester.

Ros.—Good bye! Good bye!

Gipsy Woman.—Behave yourself well, and don't shame us. What is the name of the place, Mr Forester, where you are going to take her?

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* A piece of money, worth about 5½d.

Rin.—To Sarsiglia, where I am forester. My name is Benvenuto Fromîglia; the whole town knows me.

Gipsy Woman.—We only ask that we may know where to inquire for her.

Rin.—Very well God bless you!

Ros.—Adieu.

The gipsies now loaded their beast, and began to set forward.

Rosalia took up her bundle, and accompanied Rinâldo, who pursued his way towards the ruined castle, and was very gay and happy.

Rosalia expressed her wonder at the ruins, remarked it would make an excellent habitation for gipsies, and laid herself down near Rinaldo, who had extended himself on the grass.

Rin.—And are you really come with me willingly?

Ros.—Yes, or else I should not be so cheerful; the life I have hitherto led has long been wearisome to me, and I had formed a plan of some time or other leaving my companions in the night, only I did not know where to go. But this is better.

Rin.—Who knows whether it will be better or worse?

Ros.—Why so? a gipsy girl is but a poor wretch; one must turn one's hand to something, or one cannot get one's bread. If one is once caught stealing, it is all over, and they give us quarters between heaven and earth. But if I am your housekeeper——

Rin.—I will not deceive you, I am no forester.

Ros.—Oh, heavens! then what are you?

Rin.—You may still rejoin your company, if you are not inclined to stay with me. I will not detain you; you are perfectly free. Thus you see I deal fairly with you; and I will even be so imprudent as to tell you who I am; I am Rinaldini.

Ros.—Oh, heavens! what shall I do?

Rin.—Go back, and join your company; I give you full permission to do so.

Ros.—Ah, what a famous man; I am quite frightened, for you are so great a man, and I——

Rin.—Be not uneasy; here are ten ducats, which I make you a present of.

Ros.—Oh, stay; let me but think awhile. Shall I, or shall I not? Well, come what may, I'll stay with you.

Rin.—Will you, indeed?

Ros.—Yes, I will.

Rin.—Very well. You shall see I will be careful of you; and when I am well off you shall be so too, and shall want for nothing I can procure you. Give me your hand, and promise to stay with me.

Ros.—I do; here is my hand.

Rin.—Your open countenance prejudices me in your favour, and I give you my whole confidence. You may therefore believe that I wish to be worthy of yours.

Ros.—Rinaldini, though you are so terrible a man, I will not be afraid, but will stay with you, and serve you faithfully. It seems as if I had already known you long, and we were old acquaintances.

Rin.—So it is with me; and that is the reason why I place so much confidence in you.

Ros.—You are very kind. The more confidence you place in me the happier I am with you.

Rin.—I will tell you all. Just as you see me here I escaped from an engagement with the troops of Tuscany, which but few of my men survived. I am now quite alone, and do not expect again to see the remainder of my company. Fortune, perhaps, has separated me from them for my good. I am informed by a peasant that the Tuscans believe I was killed in the battle; and I am very glad they think so. Perhaps they mistook for me my friend Severo, who resembled me, and whose head being cut open, they saw him fall; or perhaps some of my men, who might be wounded and taken prisoners, have given out that I am killed, to secure me from pursuit. I wish all Italy may believe it. Amid these ruins I will pass a couple of days till the soldiers are gone, and then we will approach certain places where I have buried some gold. If we only find three of them undiscovered, we shall have enough to live on, and will take ship, abandon Italy, sail to some foreign country, and there pass our lives together in peace.

Ros.—That is an excellent plan; and I would give anything to see it completed.

Rin.—Well, we will endeavour to accomplish it.

Thus this new alliance was concluded, and sealed with a breakfast; after which Rinaldo conducted his companion into an inner chamber of the castle, and lighted the two candles he had bought, to examine the place to which the stairs under the trap-door led.

Having descended these, they came to a spacious vault which seemed to be the vestibule of one much larger. This they examined, and found quite empty; and at the end of it they came to another staircase, leading up to a trap-door, which stood open, and led into a small court, grown over with grass. Here they crept through a narrow opening, which seemed once to have served as a doorway into a small apartment, of which the window-shutters were shut. They approached a side-door, which was bolted, and which they opened, while two snakes hissed by them. At first they started back; but again proceeded, and entered a small room, from which, however, they instantly returned, in consequence of a dreadful smell that assailed them. But Rinaldo, re-entering, found two corpses lying on the earth, in a state of corruption. They were quite naked, and covered with blood. "This," said he, "is the abode of murderers!" as he left the apartment, and again shut the door.

This horrid discovery made him uneasy, and turning to Rosalia, he said, "Here we must not stay long. I thought these ruins had been but the haunt of snakes and owls, and now I find it a den of assassins."

Rosalia drew back with horror; nor did Rinaldo long delay ere he returned with her the way they came, and hastened out of the castle as if they had been pursued. They were scarcely arrived in the open court before a gun was heard, the ball of which passed between them. Rinaldo immediately took his gun, and fired on the bush whence the shot seemed to proceed.

Upon this he heard a loud curse and a rustling noise, and instantly an armed man presented himself, and said, in a thundering voice, "Here no one dares resist. I am Baptistello, captain of a formidable band of men, who are the terror of the whole country."

Rin.—Ah! do I at last see thee, thou terrible Baptistello, of whom I have so often heard? Are you he?

Baptistello.—I am!

Rin.—Now then, learn that I will not yield a hair's breadth to you. I am as much dreaded as you—I am Rinaldini, who never yet knew fear!

Bap.—Ah! do we meet here? Know that we do not meet only to exchange these empty words! I am jealous of your fame, and this rencounter can only end in the destruction of one of us. That I will not submit to you, you may easily imagine; so draw your sabre, and show if you have the skill to use it.

Rin.—That you shall experience. But let your men come out from their ambush.

Bap.—I am quite alone. He that conquers shall be the other's heir.

Rin.—Mine is this young woman.

Bap.—Agreed. I will suffer her to go; and, besides, make her a present. Let your men come forward.

Rin.—They are above half a league off.

Bap.—Come then, draw.

Rinaldo now threw down his arms, and took off his hunting-pouch, while Rosalia's eyes were filled with tears. Rinaldo saw them not, but drew his sabre, and quickly went up to Baptistello, who already stood in a posture to receive him, which he did with coolness and courage. Stroke followed stroke, parried and returned alternately by each. The combat continued some minutes. Rinaldo grew hotter and hotter; but Baptistello still remained cool and collected. Rinaldo no longer saw or heard anything, but furiously raged against his adversary, who, unperceived by him, drew out a pistol with his left hand, which he hid behind his back, and fired at Rinaldo, but missed him.

"Villain!" cried Rinaldo, and drawing a pistol from his girdle shot his adversary through the head. Baptistello fell, and Rosalia screamed aloud; Baptistello gave up the ghost without speaking a single word; and Rinaldo wrapped him up and threw him into the bush from which he had fired at him. Here he found a bundle which he took up and gave to Rosalia; besides which he took a ring from his finger and a box of gold from his pocket. "Now, Rosalia," cried he, "let us depart before the villain's companions come."

Having proceeded about a league and a half, they found a retired spot in the thickest part

of a wood that covered the sides of a hill, at the foot of which a silver stream murmured down the declivity; in the middle of the hill was an open place, where they reposed themselves, and talked of this bloody rencounter.

Rinaldo now counted over the gold he had found upon his adversary, amounting to above two hundred ducats, besides some gold medals and pocket-pieces. Meanwhile Rosalia examined the bundle, which contained a hermit's frock, a couple of false noses, a beard, and some linen, which came very *apropos* for both of them.

Upon this they took a frugal repast; and having conversed on various subjects, passed the night in this retired and beautiful scene.

The sun was now risen, and our adventurers were proceeding on their way. At first they approached nearer to the road, but soon changed their course, and perceived, as they were quitting it, a peasant coming towards them, who, on seeing them, doubled his pace. Rosalia hurried back into the forest, but Rinaldo stood and waited for the peasant, who, at a few paces distance, cried out aloud, "Welcome, welcome, my long-lost friend and captain."

Rinaldo knew the voice, and soon perceived that the man who expressed so much joy at seeing him, was his brave companion, Cinthio. They immediately embraced affectionately, and Rosalia, trembling with fear, approached.

Rin.—And do I see you again, my brave Cinthio? And have you really escaped from the slaughter?

Cin.—Fortunately I have! Altaverde, myself, and young Steffano, together with you, are all that have escaped out of forty-nine. We three, all wounded, but myself the least, were driven over the mountain. Matthco, with his troop, were harassed at the pass of Caprile; and therefore, to be nearer the frontiers, removed over the heights of Perla, where we met him, and related our misfortune. There was no time to lose. We attacked a post of militia, left eight men upon the field, and cut our way through into this forest.

Rin.—And have you taken up your abode here?

Cin.—We have.

Rin.—Lead me to the brave fellows; I know an excellent place for us

Cin.—And who is this girl?

Rin.—She belongs to me.

Cin.—Then welcome to our party.

They now proceeded to the place where Matthco and his companions had pitched their tents. Here Rinaldo was received with the greatest joy, and related his battle with Baptistello.

"'Twas a brave action, captain" cried Matthco, "to destroy such a villain."

Rinaldo now described to them the ruins, and they immediately struck their tents to remove thither. Having taken up their quarters there, they began to prepare for their next meal.

Towards evening the sentinels gave the alarm; upon which they all seized their arms, and advanced to met a troop that was approaching, and which consisted of ten men, belonging to Baptistello's band. They soon came to an engagement, and the adverse party were worsted; six of them were killed on the spot; the remaining four submitted, took an oath of fidelity to Rinaldo, and were received into his band; upon which a feast was given, that continued till a late hour at night.

"It is of importance to us," said Rinaldo, after passing a couple of joyful days in the castle, "to learn the state of affairs in Florence, and hear some news of our comrades. I have determined to seek this information myself, and shall therefore, to-morrow, leave you for a short time; but I hope to see you soon again. Till then let Altaverde be your commander, and Matthco and Cinthio his assistants."

Notwithstanding the strong representations made to him of the danger he would incur, Rinaldo persisted in his intentions; and early the following morning mounted a beautiful horse, being handsomely dressed, and attended by Rosalia, as his servant, in boy's clothes, upon a mule. He pursued the road to Oriolo, and hastened towards the mountain to pay a visit to his friend Donato.

The soldiers had now returned to their quarters, believing they had entirely exterminated Rinaldini's band. Thus the frontiers were open and unguarded; and the morning being extremely hot, when Rinaldo approached the hermitage, Donato was sitting before the door.

On hearing the tread of horses, he arose, and was advancing, when Rinaldo presented himself. Donato did not immediately know him, as his countenance was disguised; yet he felt a kind of suspicion, which led him to examine his visitor's face more narrowly than usual.

Rin.—God be with you.

Don.—And with you!

Rin.—I am glad to see you well, my dear friend.

Don.—Do you know me, then?

Rin.—Yes; we know each other.

Don.—Are you——

Rin—Can you not guess who I am?

Don.—I suspect; and you are still alive?

Rin.—As you see.

Don.—They say you are certainly dead.

Rin.—So much the better. You see, however, I am still in the land of the living.

Don.—And how did you escape from that bloody affray?

Rin.—A man may cut his way through, if he does not fall, and that was my case.

Don.—And your people?

Rin.—A third part of them bit the earth.

Don.—'Tis said above a hundred men.

Rin.—Believe but half that number; for that is quite enough.

Don.—And what would you here now?

Rin.—See you once more before I quit Italy.

Don.—What do you mean?

Rin.—What I have said.

Don.—And in some other country——

Rin.—I will live in peace and tranquillity, do as much good as I can, and no longer head a band of robbers.

Don.—May heaven bless and favour your resolution.

Rin.—And now I am come to take up my quarters with you, to eat and drink with you, and not depart till to-morrow.

The horse and mule were now unsaddled, the bags brought into Donato's room, and his guests seated. He brought out whatever he had to eat and drink, and Rosalia, who in her present dress was called Rosetto, undertook to dress the victuals.

Towards evening, Rinaldo and Donato sat before the door, and observed the thunder-clouds that collected around the mountain and veiled its summit. Lightning darted along the sultry horizon, and the echo repeated and redoubled the distant thunder. Presently fell a few drops of rain, which soon increased to a very heavy shower, and drove them into the hermitage, where they seated themselves at the table, while Rosalia poured out the wine.

Rin.—Now, my friend, since this is probably the last time we shall ever meet, do me the favour no longer to conceal the truth, but tell me where is Aurelia?

Don.—I swear, by heaven, she is no longer in this neighbourhood.

Rin.—Is she in a convent?

Don.—No; her father has taken her away.

Rin.—Who is her father?

Don.—My friend, whom you saw when you last departed hence, the Knight of Malta and Prince of Roccella.

Rin.—And I suspect the lady in the nun's dress is her mother.

Don.—She is so; and, after the birth of her daughter, retired to the convent; for her lover, the father of her child, is a knight of Malta.* He has now taken his daughter with him, in order to marry her to advantage.

Rin.—Are you related to him?

Don.—I am his uncle.

Rin.—You are, perhaps ——

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* The knights of Malta are under a vow of perpetual celibacy.

Don.—I am an exiled Roman, of a noble family, that has been forced to yield to the power of faction and Nepotism,* the usurpations and oppressions of which they resisted.

Rin.—Can I be of service to you in opposing your enemies?

Don.—I have forgiven them, and leave their punishment to heaven.

Rin.—Are you in want of money?

Don.—By no means; besides, you have lately sent me presents without my permission. We are now drinking some of the wine you gave me.

Rin.—Is Aurelia happy?

Don.—I hope and believe she is. But are you not afraid to travel alone in a country where spies are everywhere watching for you?

Rin.—I am not without protection—except against myself.

Don.—You are a formidable man.

Rin.—And fear no one but myself.

Don.—Then you have to contend with a formidable enemy, whom you will never vanquish.

At break of day Rinaldo took leave of his host, and, having left him a letter of protection, went in search of a place where he had buried some money, which he fortunately found again, and was about to mount his horse, when he perceived a Capuchin approach. He presently discovered him to be Amadeo, who, in this disguise, was seeking his companions, and they immediately embraced, and had much to relate to each other. During a hearty breakfast, of which the Capuchin had great need, Rinaldo wrote a letter to his people, which he sent by Amadeo to Altaverde. It was to the following effect:—

"Circumstances oblige me to go to a greater distance than I expected. It will therefore be some time before I see you again. Should your present abode become unsafe or ineligible, go back to the Appennines, where you may now remain undisturbed. Endeavour to increase your numbers, and be prudent. I am on the road to strike a great stroke. Above all things, I recommend to you unanimity and the total annihilation of Baptistello's band."

With these instructions Amadeo proceeded by the road which Rinaldo described, to join his companions; while the latter took his way over San Benedetto to Sarsina, on his road to Cesena. He soon fell in with Nicolo and Sebastiano, who had quitted the forest of Basino, and reached the frontiers without impediment. Nicolo received instructions how to find his companion, and Sebastiano continued with Rinaldo as his coachman; for he purchased a coach and four mules at Sarsina, his baggage becoming heavier and heavier in consequence of the treasure he had dug up in various places. Rosalia accompanied him in the carriage, and he travelled as the Count of Dalbrogo.

At Cesena he found a mountebank singing the acts of Rinaldini in the public square, under a painted canopy. The multitude who crowded around him listened to him with the greatest attention, and Rinaldo joined the circle to hear what was said of him.

When the mountebank had sung several stanzas, he pulled his hat off, and cried, "Let us say a paternoster, my Christian brethren, for the poor repentant Rinaldini."

Upon this they all uncovered and prayed; and Rinaldo, to avoid observation, also joined in this prayer himself.

The mountebank now threw his hat down among the audience, saying, "I also am a poor Christian; blessed be they that give!"

One of the company took up the hat and received in it a shower of small coin, and Rinaldo threw in some silver, which drew from one of his neighbours an exclamation of, "Bravo, Christiano!"

When the hat came back to its owner, he gathered the money, put it in his pocket, and placing his hat upon his head, sang three or four more stanzas.

The audience, who were all much moved, except Rinaldo, now dispersed; while the mountebank packed up his little stage, and removed to another square to repeat the same performance. Many of the company followed him to hear once more this interesting story.

Meanwhile Rinaldo turned to one of his neighbours, who seemed to be a magistrate, or

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* A word used to describe the factions arising from the power and influence of the relations of the pope.

person of consequence, and asked him, "Is Rinaldini really dead?"—"Yes," replied the other; "and God be merciful to his sinful soul! His death is certain."

"Where then did he die?"—"In the mountains; in a battle with the militia of Tuscany. His head is now on a pole, before the town-house of Pienza."

"That is very good news."—"Certainly; for he was the terror of all Tuscany and Lombardy. 'Tis much to be lamented that he employed his courage and his talents to no better purpose."

A Franciscan monk offered to say a couple of masses for Rinaldini's soul, and received the money for that purpose. Rinaldo gave him something towards it, and thus contributed to his own obsequies while yet alive.

On the following day, as he was about to leave Cesena, he perceived the above-mentioned knight of Malta coming towards him; and as it was impossible to avoid a meeting, went directly up to him and took him by the hand, saying, "Prince, I am in your power."

"Heavens!" returned the prince, with astonishment, "is it possible!—have you really thus escaped?"

Rin.—You see I am still alive.

Prince.—From me you have nothing to fear. I am no police-officer.

Rin.—Should it ever, in the course of my life, be in my power to serve you——

Prince.—No ceremonies! Only take care of yourself.

Rin.—Every one believes I am dead, and they are singing my untimely end in every street.

Prince.—So much the better for you; but do you venture thus openly and alone——

Rin.—Imagine not I am alone. My people accompany me in a hundred different shapes, and my apprehension would cause a torrent of blood.

Prince.—How! Have you——

Rin.—I have sixty of the most resolute fellows with me in this very town.

Prince.—You astonish me.

Rin.—Rather pity me. I am now going to Venice, on my way to the mountains of the Tyrol; and who knows whether I shall ever arrive there?

Prince.—Will you never abandon this course of life?

Rin.—I will; in Germany I intend to dismiss my troop, should I be so fortunate as to arrive there. But where are you going?

Prince.—To Urbino.

Rin.—There I shall see you again; but meanwhile permit me to ask you, is your daughter happy?

Prince.—How? Do you know——?

Rin.—Donato is my friend.

Prince.—Yes; she is happily married.

Rin.—God bless her! Prince, my people fell in with your mules and——

Prince.—Silence on that subject.

Rin.—Do me the favour to accept from me this ring. If you will not wear it yourself, give it to Aurelia.

Prince.—As a remembrance from so remarkable a man, I will accept it.

Rin.—I thank you; and as you intend to travel so far, I also request your acceptance of this letter, in consequence of which my people will respect you wherever you meet them.

Prince.—Well, I will also accept this present; but, sincerely, how strong are you?

Rin.—I am as strong as an army. I have eight hundred men under my orders throughout Italy. From Savoy to Naples, ten captains command them, and I am their generalissimo.

Prince.—Oh! how much you have to answer for!

Rin.—Only for what I myself command. Fare you well!

Thus saying, he went and ordered his carriage, but prudently took neither the road to Venice nor Urbino, but by another way returned to the forest.

This time, however, Rinaldo did not visit Donato, but having sold his mules, sent forward Sebastiano, and restoring his money to a place of security, set forward for the Appennine mountains.

Here he found an empty hermitage, which seemed to have been recently deserted, as ap-

peared by some fresh writing that lay on a table to the following effect:—"Whoever thou art that shalt succeed me, and choose this hermitage for thy abode, mayst thou be as happy as I, who have hitherto inhabited it, and have written this paper, which I request you in like manner to leave behind you."

Rinaldo had scarcely read this before a thought struck him to live there for a while in the character of a hermit. He immediately put on his hermit's dress, and Rosalia acted as housekeeper, though their mode of life, particularly their table and cellar, were far more luxurious than a hermit usually enjoys.

Two days after they arrived here, as Rinaldo was taking his morning walk, he saw a man sitting on an eminence and drawing. Having therefore approached and accosted him, he inquired what he was about. "I am taking a view of this place," said he, "because it has of late acquired great celebrity."

"How so?"—"Do you not know? This is the spot where Rinaldo died; under that tree his head was cut open, and he expired immediately. A soldier, who was in the engagement, gave me a full description of the place. When I have made my drawing and engraved it, I shall sell it, prettily coloured, and make a great profit. Another plate will contain the battle, which will, doubtless, also sell very well. In the view I am now taking I shall introduce a gallows near the tree I have just mentioned, as an emblem of the subject."

"An excellent speculation."—"Ay, that is the way of the world; such incidents are always beneficial to the arts."

Rinaldo wished him a good sale for his pictures, and left him, yet he could not help feeling some pain at the emblem which was to serve as his monument.

As he returned to his hermitage he heard a noise there; on listening to which, he perceived some voices speaking in a threatening tone, and Rosalia weeping.

He instantly entered the room, where he saw Rosalia crying, on a bench, and two ill-looking fellows about to break open a cupboard, upon which they were so intent that they did not hear Rinaldo come in. The latter gave Rosalia the wink to be silent, and suddenly advancing, threw one of them to the ground, and seized a pistol belonging to the other, which lay on the table. Rosalia suddenly took up a musket from behind a chair, and, springing forward, attacked the other thief, who, astonished and confounded, let fall the tool with which he was breaking open the cupboard.

Meanwhile Rinaldo, applying the pistol to the breast of the man who was down, called to the other, "Lay down your arms." Rosalia also cried out, repeating these orders, and added, "Lay them down, you villain, or I will shoot you dead."

Both the robbers were now disarmed, and Rinaldo asked them, with the utmost coolness and tranquillity, "What is your business here? Who are you?"—"Behave with respect," replied the one, "we belong to Rinaldini."

"Never, never," said Rinaldini; "such actions his people never would commit. No, no; you are thieves of whom Rinaldini knows as little as you of him. Villains that you are, kneel down and ask pardon; I, I myself am Rinaldini."

On this they both knelt down, full of terror, and embraced his knees. "Pardon, captain," said the one, hesitating; "we did not know you, but we have really belonged to your people these three days. Altaverde and Cinthio themselves enlisted us. We deserve punishment by your laws; punish us as you please."

Rinaldo was about to answer, when the door opened and Cinthio entered. "You have been enlisting some pretty rascals here," cried Rinaldo.

Cinthio.—The devil! What! you here, captain, and in a hermit's frock; I never should have expected it. How I rejoice to see you again! But what is the use of these reliques? Are you performing your noviciate?

Rin.—Do these men know our laws?

Cint.—They have heard them read.

Rin.—And have they sworn to them?

Cin.—They have.

Rin.—This young woman was left here alone, and when I entered, these men were breaking open the cupboard.

Ros.—And besides I showed them a letter of protection from Rinaldini himself.

Rin.—Indeed!

Cin.—A thousand curses on them!—and not respect your captain's written orders!—Holloa! comrades, come in; bind these villains to yonder tree and shoot them. They have violated their captain's letter of protection.

"Curses on the assassins!" cried the robbers, who had instantly entered on Cinthio's calling them, and immediately seized and took them out. Thus, having bound them to a tree, and firing eight musket-balls at them, they blew out their brains.

This incident occasioned Rinaldo to leave the hermitage. Meanwhile Cinthio collected his people together, and, being twenty in number, they descended into the valley, and so to the mountain of Fortini, where Altaverde was stationed with a party of sixty men, he having remarked some movements in the ecclesiastical state tending to their expulsion from the forest they had hitherto occupied.

Rinaldo now ordered his tent on the summit of the highest hill towards Belforte to be struck, mustered his band, which he found eighty strong, and removed to a mountain which commanded Brancolino.

A few days afterwards came Altaverde and joined him.—"Captain," said he, "we begin to be in great want of provisions."

Rin.—It must be remedied.

Alt.—The men murmur at it, and begin to complain at their inactivity.

Rin.—Then we must find them employment.

Alt.—Certainly; and besides money is very scarce with some of them, who have lost at play.

Rin.—Well! here are two hundred sequins, which I will distribute among the men. Employment they shall also have. Let the whole troop be assembled this evening. I will assign them their parts.

When evening came the band assembled in the appointed valley, where Rinaldo joined them in his captain's uniform, and ordered them to form a circle round him. This they silently performed, leant on their muskets, and waited with the greatest expectation to hear what their commander would say.

"Comrades," said Rinaldo, "I am informed your provisions begin to fail, and it is fit we should take measures to procure a fresh supply; but this must be done with prudence. I therefore divide among you two hundred sequins of my own property."

"Long live our captain!" cried they all, till the mountains re-echoed with the sound.

Rinaldo having taken off his hat, and again covered himself, proceeded:—"With this money let provisions be bought in the neighbouring towns, and those of you who are best acquainted with the places may perform this commission in the dress of hermits. On this subject they may communicate with Altaverde, who will superintend the whole. In five or six days I will speak with you again, and hope then to lead you forth to a great enterprise. Meanwhile Cinthio may enter the frontier forest by the great road, accompanied by twelve of you, and return with wine and fruit, or oil; he knows what he is to do. I will give him money to pay the poor carriers for whatever he may take of them; besides which, he will admonish them to silence under the strongest threats. The carriages and mules must not be taken from them. But if an idle prelate, or such persons, come in your way, take from them what they have in money and money's worth. But I again recommend your sparing all poor travellers and hermits. Every violation of this rule I will punish, as you know, with death. Now depart to your various stations; and so farewell!" Having said this, Rinaldo left them and a loud cry of joy pursued him as he went.

When he returned to his tent he found Rosalia sitting in a corner, full of terror and alarm.

Rin.—What is the matter!

Ros.—Oh! I tremble from head to foot.

Rin.—What has happened?

Ros.—I have twice seen a white figure; the second time it looked into the tent, raised its hand, and threatened with its finger. I thank God you are returned!

Rinaldo, without saying a word, made a signal, on which some of his people came in, among whom was Cinthio. Rinaldo informed them what Rosalia had seen, and immediately gave orders to post guards all round the mountain, at the same time sending Sebastiano to Altaverde, whom he informed what had happened, and instructed to be on the watch.

They all went to their posts, and Rinaldo threw himself on his bed, having first lighted an additional lamp. Rosalia sat by him and played on the guitar.

She had not sung many stanzas before the white figure came into the tent, and Rosalia screamed aloud—"Jesus Maria! there it is!" and Rinaldo, rising, asked—"Who art thou?" but, receiving no answer, he seized a pistol, and taking aim at the figure, said—"If you are a ghost, expect this ball."

The figure still threatened with his finger, and Rinaldo pulled the trigger, but his pistol, though an excellent one, missed fire, and, as he again cocked it, the figure disappeared. Rinaldo sprang up, and hurried out, but could not see anything. Immediately a gun went off in the valley, then a second, and then a third.

Rinaldo now hastened down the hill to his sentinels, three of whom had seen a white figure, at which they had fired. Upon this a general alarm was spread with horns and fifes, and immediately the whole corps was assembled.

After relating to each other what they had seen, and continuing some time together, they again separated, and Rinaldo returned to his tent, where he and Rosalia having drunk some wine, they lay down. Rosalia soon fell asleep, but Rinaldo thus communed with himself—"History affords various examples of similar appearances foretelling the fall of great men. Brutus was forewarned by a ghost, who spoke to him; this figure, however, preserved a perfect silence. Yet it threatened with its finger; was this to me? But it first threatened Rosalia, when she sat alone in the tent—to her first; to me afterwards. This was not imagination; five of us saw it. My best pistol missed fire, which it never did before, and my men, who did fire, missed their aim, though they can always hit their man. How wonderful! Yet wherefore should I be afraid?—afraid? no, that I will never be."

Unable to sleep, he sprang up, threw on his cloak, and descended into the valley, where he drank and conversed with his sentinels, and began to joke on what had passed.

The sun now rising, he feasted his eyes on the magnificent scenery it afforded, at the same time saying to himself with a sigh—"Yet it rises not to me so beautiful as when I tended my father's goats."

Nicolo now came running up to him, and crying out—"Captain, we have taken some loads of provisions belonging to the rich monks of Mangolo, for which reason we have paid nothing for them; if the monks wish to be paid they may apply to you. But the best of the story is, that we made a friar that accompanied it say a paternoster for us all, and give us absolution, which he did with a lamentable voice, and then we let him go."

"This incident will make a noise," said Rinaldo, and returned in pensive mood to his tent, where Rosalia was already risen, and preparing chocolate.

Rinaldo seated himself to breakfast before his tent, and viewed the misty vale, from which, as the sun became more powerful, the fog departed, and the distant plains displayed themselves in all their varied beauties to his view.

He now looked through his glass at the intersecting roads, and found them all clear, except a carriage which was moving slowly on; calling therefore to Sebastiano, he instructed him to see what it was, and the latter immediately flew to execute his commands.

Rinaldo now fixed his eyes on a castle at no great distance, which, without being able to account for it, had particularly attracted his attention. He resolved to take a nearer view of it. He therefore dressed himself in a green hunter's dress edged with gold, put on a hat adorned with feathers, took his double-barrelled gun, and accompanied by his dog, descended the hill, and took the road that led to the castle.

To the right was a monastery, inhabited by well-fed Benedictines; before the door of which a monk was walking to and fro, and reading.

Having saluted each other, they entered into the following conversation:—

Rin.—You seem to contemplate me with wonder; at what are you surprised?

Monk.—I am wondering to see you travelling alone, as if you had nothing to fear.

Rin.—And what should I fear?

Monk.—Do you not know these mountains are infested with banditti?

Rin.—I have not heard of them.

Monk.—Yes, it is perfectly true; we have found it true by experience. They have taken from us a quantity of wine, and Father Barnard, who accompanied it, was obliged to absolve

the villains; such an absolution, however, being compulsory, cannot avail, and the vagabonds will pay dearly for their joke.

Rin.—How so?

Monk—The rascals will not only be formally excommunicated by us, but we shall also give intelligence of the event, and a body of men will be sent out against them, that will ferret them out of all their holes.

Rin.—Then blood will flow.

Monk.—The more their blood flows the better for injured mankind.

Rin.—Will money and good words purchase a breakfast of you?

Monk.—Most assuredly; walk in.

Rin.—I would rather have it in the open air, and then return up the mountain, since you tell me the road is not safe.

Upon this the monk left him, and soon returned with a lay brother, who brought a bottle of wine and some pastry.

Monk.—Do you live in this neighbourhood?

Rin.—I am on a visit with a friend, whose castle is not far.

Monk.—Aha! have you not heard, then, of the famous Rinaldini?

Rin.—He was killed in a skirmish. I heard a circumstantial account of his death at Cesena.

Monk.—So it is reported; yet some maintain that this Proteus is still alive; and, indeed, a true Proteus he must be, for he goes about in a thousand various forms.

Rin.—Do you not know him?

Monk.—God forbid! If we knew where to meet with him, we would endeavour to purchase of him a letter of protection for us and our property.

Rin.—And how much would you give him?

Monk.—We have offered him an hundred sequins, and broke off because he demanded more.

Rin.—But suppose you gave the money to the soldiers who are sent out against him?

Monk.—That would avail but little, for his troops are always increasing, though they have been frequently half destroyed; besides, he is above five hundred strong.

Rin.—Heavens! and how does this man support so large a band?

Monk.—By robbery; they steal like crows.

Rin.—But I should think if proper measures were adopted, this evil might be eradicated.

Monk.—Proper measures! How so?

Rin.—At least I think so.

Monk.—Well, every man may have useful ideas, be he layman or priest; but what do you think ought to be done?

Rin.—In my opinion, government might effect it.

Monk.—As for example.

Rin.—A general pardon for Rinaldo and his people.

Monk.—God forbid!

Rin.—An invitation to return and mix in civil society.

Monk.—God defend us! who could associate with such robbers and outlaws? We could not even conscientiously bury a pious Christian by the side of such a ruffian. Talk not then of any man living with him in society; no, that is impossible—the sins of this reprobate may indeed be pardoned on his death-bed, if he turn to God, but hang he must without remission. If he die in his sins and without absolution, the devil will have his soul; but no man must, on any account, hold communion with such a miscreant.

Rin.—And yet you yourself wish to hold communion with him.

Monk.—How? God forbid!

Rin.—Would you not buy of him a letter of protection?

Monk.—That is not communion, but prudence. Necessity has no law. We will buy of him a protection, and then excommunicate him. Such men must be dealt with as the heathens, who know not God.

Rin.—Suppose now I were Rinaldini, and knew this your intention?

Monk.—God forbid!

Rin.—I am only supposing a case.

Monk.—Well; but——

Rin.—Then would I—supposing I were Rinaldini—you understand——

Monk.—Yes, yes.

Rin.—Then would I punish you all severely.

Monk.—'Tis well Rinaldini knows it not.

Rin—Yes, indeed!

Monk.—For he must be a very revengeful fellow; but perhaps he is no more.

Rin.—That is highly probable. It is asserted that his head is now exposed on a pole at Pienza.

Monk.—Is it so? But I am as much afraid of his people as of himself.

Rin.—But who knows whether they have his head?

Monk.—Head!—hem! that can be of little use! What can the head of a goatherd avail them?

Rin.—In that respect nature may have been more bountiful to him than to many a prelate.

Monk.—He has never studied, and nature does nothing alone. I presume you have gone through your studies?

Rin.—At three different universities.

Monk.—Indeed! Jurisprudence?

Rin.—Ethics, logic, &c.

Monk.—Aha!—very excellent studies! Are you your own master?

Rin.—I am; at least, I believe so.

Monk.—Have you any fortune?

Rin.—A large one.

Monk.—Riches are the gift of God; to those he loves he gives gold; and, observe, a good understanding to employ it properly. We here are not so rich as we appear. We have just enough to eat and drink, but no superfluities.

Rin.—Superfluities are useless; they but enervate mankind, and render them lethargic and inactive. Your wine is good!

Monk.—Oh, yes; we have a good glass of wine—for strangers. As for ourselves, we drink none; or, at least, very little.

Rin.—Then drink some with me.

Monk.—I thank you.

Rin.—Come, no ceremony!

Monk.—Well, if you insist upon it—if you positively will have it so—your health, noble sir!

Rin.—Good may it do you! Since we are here together, let us empty a bottle between us.

Monk.—Well, I——

Rin.—You have no objection, I presume?

Monk.—Objection! oh, yes; but——

Rin.—No ceremonies! But tell me to whom belongs yon beautiful castle?

Monk.—It has lately come into the possession of the Baron Rovezzo, who has purchased it; but it formerly belonged to the house of Altieri.

Rin.—Does the baron reside there?

Monk.—Both he and his lovely young bride, whom he has lately brought home. She is a quiet, good Christian; but the baron is a little wild. May I ask you your name?

Rin.—Count Dalbrogo.

Monk.—Dalbrogo! Dalbrogo! That is a family from——

Rin.—The Italian part of Switzerland.

Monk.—Aha! from Switzerland? So——

At this time Sebastiano slowly and silently approaching them, Rinaldo gave him a wink, and thus addressed him:—

Rin.—Whither are you going, traveller?

Seb.—To the mountain where I live.

Rin.—Do you live safe there?

Seb—Why not?

Rin.—They talk of robbers.

Seb.—Where nothing is, nothing can be lost. We have not much, at best. Within such walls as these they would find a richer booty.

Monk.—The little we have is the property of the church.

Seb.—On which you most heartily fatten—Addio !

Monk.—Hark ye; this rogue has a very suspicious look. Perhaps he is one of the banditti

Rin.—Mountaineers have generally a wild look.

The clock now striking, the monk hastened to rejoin the choir. Rinaldo therefore paid his reckoning, and took his way towards the castle.

Adjoining this edifice was a high wall, surrounding a beautiful garden, where Rinaldo, finding a wicket open, immediately entered. On approaching a small grove he perceived a lady, who, hearing footsteps behind her, quickly turned round; and perceiving Rinaldo, screamed aloud. The latter instantly recognised, and approached her.

Rin.—Is it possible? Scarcely can I trust my eyes! Is this imagination or reality? Aurelia! the beautiful Aurelia here!

Aur.—The same.

Rin.—Here?

Aur.—In the castle of my husband.

Rin.—Your husband! And are you really married?

Aur.—Yes, alas!

Rin.—How! Tears in the eyes of Aurelia!

Aur.—Oh, these signs of that misfortune, which pursues me throughout my life, may convince you how wretched I am.

Rin.—Aurelia! and unhappily married!

Aur.—Ah, heavens!

Rin.—Ah, when good old Donato——

Aur.—Oh that I had been left to live in solitude with him, or that I had remained at my foster-father's farm; how happy had I been. My good father, indeed, meant well, and wished to make me happy; but I am most wretched.

Rin.—Perhaps the lovely Aurelia brought with her here the source of her misfortune?

Aur.—How do you mean? My heart was free. Innocent and pure was I when I came to my husband. My father gave me a very large fortune, and for that alone my husband married me. Ah, friend of the worthy Donato, tell that venerable old man how miserable I am.

Rin.—Will you grant me your confidence without reserve?

Aur.—My father knows you also, and——

Rin.—What did your father say of me? Do you know who I am?

Aur.—When he spoke of you to me he called you a celebrated man, but did not tell me your name.

Rin.—I am the Count Dalbrogo; and you know, already, I am your father's friend. A short time ago, at Cesena, we exchanged rings, as a sign of friendship. Did he tell you nothing of it?

Aur.—It is long since I saw or spoke with him.

Rin.—Does he know you are unhappy?

Aur.—If he has received my letters he must know it; but of that I am extremely doubtful, since I have never received an answer to any of them. Perhaps my husband, by means of his spies, intercepts even my letters.

Rin.—Well, me he can neither corrupt nor intercept. I will speak to your father, and say to him whatever you desire me.

Aur.—Will you, indeed?

Rin.—I will engage my word of honour. What complaints have you against your husband?

Aur.—He is a tyrant to me, and treats me with contempt. He breaks his nuptial faith almost before my eyes, with mercenary wretches whom he keeps here in his castle.

Rin.—The villain!

Aur.—He plagues and torments me incessantly with reproaches.

Rin.—With what reproaches?

Aur.—Ah, heavens! with my illegitimate birth, which——Ah, he knew that before he married me.

Rin.—Do you love him?

Aur.—I loved him once; but now he has compelled me to hate him.

Rin.—You hate him?

Aur.—I abhor him as I do my sins. It was but yesterday he exposed me to the ridicule of his companions, and his mercenary prostitutes make a jest of me. I am treated like a slave.

Rin.—You shall have satisfaction.

Aur.—I am fully resolved, if my father does not soon interfere, to abandon this scene of vice and debauchery, and to fly.

Rin.—Whither will you fly?

Aur.—To my mother.

Rin.—Where is she?

Aur.—She is abbess of the convent of St Clara, near Montamara.

Rin.—When first I beheld Aurelia in that happy valley, and when I afterwards conversed with her at the peaceful hermitage of Donato, I said to myself, "How happy will be the man to whom Aurelia shall give her hand and heart!" And now this excellent girl is miserable! No; by heavens, it shall not be! At least she shall be revenged. Such is the solemn oath of one who will keep his word; it is the oath of Dalbrogo!

Aur.—Ah, count, why will you bring yourself to destruction, perhaps, for my sake?

Rin.—For your sake I would engage with monsters and with devils.

Aur.—Count, you alarm me.

Rin.—How shall I know the wretch? Is he in the castle?

Aur.—He is hunting with some of his companions.

Rin.—Who are they?

Aur.—Adventurers from all corners of the earth, whom he has collected round him, and who are dissipating my fortune in debauchery, gambling, drinking, and——ah, heavens! they are very bad men; two Frenchmen and a Sicilian, who, perhaps, have escaped from the hands of justice; but they call themselves noble, that I am sure is false. You can scarcely conceive what with indecency they treat me.

Rin.—By heavens, were I present, it should be the last ill action they should commit.

Aur.—Ah, count, would you who are a stranger——

Rin.—My oath shall be fulfilled, and I will revenge you. The riotous laughter of these villains shall be changed to mourning, and you shall have exemplary satisfaction, or my name —is not Dalbrogo. But of whom is the portrait that hangs at your breast?

Aur.—It is the portrait of my husband.

Rin.—Show it me. Is it like?

Aur.—A strong likeness.

Rin.—Well; now I shall know him. But away with this portrait from your bosom.

Aur.—By no means; he would beat me if I omitted to wear it.

Rin.—What! has he ever dared——

Aur.—Ah, heavens! I now bear the marks of his cruelty on my body.

Rin.—Villain! Thou shalt soon bear the marks of my retribution, which——

Aur.—Oh, heavens! there comes my husband, with his companions, up the walk!

Rin.—It is too late to fly; stay, and I will stay also; I am a friend of your father's, who has commissioned me to visit you in his name. In my presence he will not dare to insult you. With a single word I could smite him to the earth, and before morning dawns you shall be rescued.

The baron and his companions now approached, and Rinaldo advancing a few steps toward him, took off his hat, saying, "I am glad, baron, to make your acquaintance. The prince, your father-in-law, desires me to salute you in his name, and to inform you that he will speedily pay you a visit. I am his friend, and Count Dalbrogo is my name."—"Your humble servant," replied the baron, with great coldness; then turning to Aurelia, said, with a sarcastic smile, "Perhaps, too, an old acquaintance of yours, and you have not invited this agreeable visitor and messenger of good news from your father into the castle? Pardon," continued he, "the inattention of my wife, but she has been brought up at a farm-house; that, however, you probably know already."

Rin.—I do; she has been brought up with very good and worthy people.

Baron.—So my father-in-law will soon pay us a visit? Has he not fixed the day of his arrival?

Rin.—I believe you may expect him daily.

Baron.—That is unfortunate, for I have fixed a journey for to-morrow which I cannot possibly defer.

Rin.—He will expect your return; he said he had many things to speak of with you.

Baron.—So; but unfortunately I may be obliged to be absent some months: perhaps you intend to await his arrival here?

Rin.—No; I have affairs of importance to settle at Rome, and would therefore expedite my departure. Had you not returned as you did, I should have been deprived of the pleasure of seeing you; I was taking leave of your lady when I learnt your arrival.

Baron.—But you will stay and take your dinner with us?

Rin.—I must beg to be excused.

Baron.—I entreat you.

Rin.—It is impossible; my hours are all counted.

Baron.—I regret that I had not the pleasure of your acquaintance earlier. I hope my wife has entertained you well; but I fear she has had one of those fits of ill-humour that so frequently attack her.

Rin.—In fact; but excuse me; from the state in which I found your wife, I should attribute more to grief than ill-humour. Meanwhile I would not be indiscreet, and——

Baron.—Yes, yes; she has the art of covering her ill-humour with the veil of grief, and calls her obstinacy and caprice lowness of spirits.

Rin.—Yet she formerly appeared so gay and happy, that——

Baron.—Perhaps she is not married to your liking. Sir Count, you are vexed that she has fallen to my lot.

Rin.—Sir Baron, you joke.

Baron.—Far from it; the simpleton, perhaps, would have been better pleased had she been removed from the shepherd's field to your pasture; she would then have remained as she was before.

Rin.—Yes, equally good, noble, and lovely.

Baron.—Ay, in the eyes of a lover.

Rin.—Baron, I remark with astonishment and grief that your marriage is not happy.

Baron.—That you have, no doubt, learnt from this paragon of sensibility; she bewails every creature in the village.

Rin.—By heaven it grieves me that your father-in-law must find things as they are.

Baron.—He may take her back if he pleases, or restore her to her very honourable mother.

Rin.—Baron, this bitterness shows——

Baron.—That I would be rid of the fool—nothing farther. Will you please to take her with you?

Rin.—No insults, baron; I will not hear them.

Baron.—This warmth in the cause of my wife proves——

Rin.—That which it shall prove; nothing more and nothing less. I am her father's friend, who will certainly not permit——

Baron.—He may receive his jewel back; I want her no more.

Rin.—Nor do you deserve to possess her.

Baron.—Thunder and lightning! sir Count——

Rin.—What do you mean?

Baron.—Away with you, sir, and take this strumpet with you, that she may no longer offend my eyes.

Rin.—Your brutality——

Baron.—Here I am master.

Rin.—Then be so of yourself; for all you have said and done you shall give me full satisfaction.

Baron.—In Rome?

Rin.—Here in your castle.

Baron.—Whenever you please.

Rin.—This very day.

Baron.—This very moment I will settle your account for you.

Rin.—I will settle yours for you, you wretch!

Baron.—Such language shall be answered by my servants with horsewhips.

Rinaldo (putting his hand to his sword).—Draw!

Baron.—How?

Rin.—Draw, or I will cut you down.

Aur.—For God's sake, count, be calm! you do not know these men.

Baron (giving her a box on the ear).—Silence! now complain of that to your lover.

Rin.—By heavens, baron, that shall be repaid with blood.

Baron.—Leave my castle, or, as this is my right hand, I will order my people to turn you out.

Rin.—Cowardly villain! that you yourself dare not do. Aurelia, you shall certainly be rescued. As for you, villain, who call yourself her husband, I shall this very day speak to you in a way that you shall feel severely.

The baron and his companions laughed aloud; and, as Rinaldo quitted the garden, cried out after him, "A pleasant journey to you, Don Quixote; you may now go and tell your adventures to your mamma."

The temper in which Rinaldo rejoined his companions may easily be imagined. He was scarcely able to contain himself. His appearance made Rosalia tremble, for she had never beheld him so before.

"Captain," said Cinthio, "what has happened?"

"That you shall learn," replied he; "call Altaverde to me."

With him and Cinthio Rinaldo now communed; and when evening approached, Altaverde, at the head of twenty men, descended into the valley. Cinthio went towards the left with sixteen, and ten accompanied Rinaldo. Rosalia remained in the tent, which was safely guarded by Nicolo.

These corps were in motion about the time it grew dark; but they had scarcely left their former post, when Sebastiano followed them with five-and-twenty men, and stationed himself near the Benedictine monastery above mentioned. Cinthio crossed the river, took possession of the bridge, and posted himself by the garden wall of Baron Rovezzo. Altaverde occupied the high road and that leading to the village, and placed his men round the castle as far as the post of Cinthio; and Rinaldo, with his party, went up to the castle gate, which was shut. On sounding the horn, a servant unbolted it, and inquired who was there; but he was seized by the throat, dragged out, and delivered to Altaverde's party. Three men took possession of the gate, and the rest followed Rinaldo across the court-yard, and made themselves masters of the house door. Two others entered the servants' hall with cocked pistols, and commanded silence, which the servants, who were terrified and trembling with fear, obeyed.

Rinaldo cut the string of the alarm-bell with his stiletto, and with three men went up stairs to an apartment where the baron was sitting at table with his companions and mistresses.

The door being half open, Rinaldo listened, and heard that he himself, under the name of Count Dalbrogo, was the subject of their raillery. They called him a blustering coward; and Aurelia, who was obliged to sit at table, was forced to hear the disgusting language of her husband in silence, to avoid his ill-treatment.

The baron's mistresses rallied her relative to her former lover; and her husband said aloud, "Suppose I had not let the rascal go!"

"We would have cut off his nose," said one of the Frenchmen.

"If he does but return," said the baron.

"Here he is!" said Rinaldo, and immediately entered the room.

Meanwhile Altaverde's people had taken possession of the castle-gate, and Sebastiano had approached nearer. Three more of Rinaldo's men now joined the other three, who stood at the door of the apartment, and six of Altaverde's followed them.

These twelve men waited for a signal from Rinaldo, who had alone entered in the apartment, where his sudden appearance not a little surprised the company. "I am come," continued he, "to keep my promise. You now perceive that I am punctual. Here I stand, and

demand satisfaction of you. From the baron to the man who proposed to cut off my nose, I will call every one of you to account."

The baron now began to laugh aloud, and called to one of his servants, "Let my people come and give this Quixotte the account he asks for."

The servant scarce began to move, when Rinaldo seized and threw him down; then taking his pistol he pointed to the table and said, "The first who dares to stir from his seat is a dead man! Miserable, worthless miscreants! you that threaten me so freely, tremble, and kneel down before me! Know you who I am? Down upon your knees! I am Rinaldini!"

Upon this they all knelt down as if thunderstruck. Aurelia screamed aloud, and sank in a swoon. Rinaldo obliged the women to assist her; and having given the signal agreed on, his twelve followers entered the room. The whole company were still upon their knees, when Rinaldo approached Aurelia, who was beginning to recover. He threw himself upon his knees, and kissed her hand.

"Is it you, rash man," said she, in a broken voice, "that have rescued me? Oh, be as generous as you are courageous! be as kind as you are terrible! Deal with me honourably, and conduct me to my mother! Abuse not your power, nor make my yet unspotted name the jest of mankind!"—"Oh," said Rinaldini, sighing, "now I feel what I am!" Then suddenly turning round, he beheld Sebastiano entering the room with some of his party, and said, "As yet, this rat-catching expedition has cost no blood, and it shall end in the same manner. Flog this villain, who is the husband of that unfortunate lady, till not one white spot is left. Drive these Frenchmen and Sicilians two or three times up and down with rods. The girls I give you as prizes; but this worthy French counsellor, who advised cutting off my nose, shall be served in like manner himself."

The Frenchman dreadfully lamented his hard case, but Rinaldini was deaf to his entreaties; he persisted in his orders, and his comrades took the delinquents from the apartment.

Rinaldo again approached Aurelia, desired her to collect together her apparel and jewels, and ordered a carriage to be prepared, in which he placed her, together with her waiting-woman; then mounting his horse, he called out to his companions, "Plunder the castle, but do not burn it."

Rinaldo followed the carriage, which he ordered to stop about a mile from St Clair's convent, at Montamara; then, riding up to the coach door, asked for Aurelia's hand, upon a finger of which he put a ring, and kissing her hand, said with emotion, "Aurelia, may you be happier than I."

Having thus spoken, he clapped spurs to his horse, and arrived at break of day at his tent, where he was soon joined by his people, who returned loaded with booty.

Rinaldo was sitting before his tent, and reflecting on the consequences that might ensue from this enterprise, when Rosalia approached him, seated herself near him, and taking up her guitar, though unrequested, sang the following air:—

"Hear me, lov'd Almanzor, hear,
Grant thy Laura's fond request!
Still to thee is Laura dear?
Reigns her image in thy breast?

"Wilt thou Laura fondly love
When her infant climbs thy knee?
Wilt thou to that infant prove
Source of endless infamy?

"Sooner would thy Laura fly,
Where thou ne'er shalt know thy child;
Rather, ah! far rather die,
Graveless in some desert wild,
Than to thee an offspring bear,
Stamp'd as Shame's dishonour'd heir."

"Ah, Rosalia," interrupted Rinaldo, "I guess—yes, I know who this Laura is! Almanzor will never desert her."

Rosalia embraced him tenderly, and thus continued: "What peace can a mother enjoy when contemplating the image of her beloved upon her lap, when our offspring will be but a source of misery to us if we do not leave this course of life. But, by heavens, it shall and must be! nor will I bring up my son to the gallows."

The appearance of Sebastiano interrupted this conversation. He brought intelligence that two of their people were taken up at St Leo, and thrown into prison, and that a third had escaped. He also brought news that, from an information of the baron, proclamation had been made against him.

Towards evening Rinaldo ordered his tent to be struck, and giving the signal for departure, stationed himself, after a journey of three days, in the vallies of the Albano mountains.

Two days after his arrival, he gave orders to Sebastiano to go, with sixteen resolute fellows, in various disguises, to Cagli, in the neighbourhood of Montamara. Altaverde also received a commission to endeavour to liberate the two prisoners by address or by force; and Rinaldo himself, as a traveller on horseback, attended by Nicolo and Alphonso as his servants, rode about the country upon the scout. Cinthio remained as captain of the band, and Rinaldo commended to his care Rosalia, who took leave of him with tears.

"I feel," said she, with emotion, "as though we should never meet again!"

Rinaldo endeavoured to console her without success, and left her extremely agitated. He soon reached Fossombrona, where, having put up at the principal inn, he rested a couple of days, desirous of giving Sebastiano's party time to collect in the neighbourhood of Montamara.

The day after his arrival he visited a tavern, where he found several of the inhabitants, among whom were two advocates, and some notaries, engaged in apparently interesting conversation over a bottle. Rinaldo called also for wine; and seating himself near them, listened to their discourse.

A Townsman.—'Tis a very bad business.

Advocate.—Ah, very bad indeed!

Notary.—A very shocking affair!

Adv.—The baroness has twice been heard. She persists that she previously knew the person of the aforesaid Count Dalbrogo, but took him for a man of good character; and neither knew, nor in the least suspected, that he was the celebrated Rinaldini; and that she first learnt this with great terror and affright when he avowed himself on the night of these events. On the other hand, the baron, who was dreadfully maltreated, maintains that his wife has lived in an understanding with this terrible robber; and that her father is one of his acquaintance, who has long, contrary to law, been in treaty to make discovery to the magistracy, to which he is bound. The prince is in custody at Urbino, and will be closely examined.

Townsman.—One hardly knows as yet what to think of it.

Notary.—The baron estimates his loss at the castle at three thousand ducats. He and his friends were maltreated, and one of the Frenchmen was mutilated by the robbers. It is true he still lives, but he is very ill and miserable.

Townsman.—These robbers are very devils.

Notary.—I pity the poor prince; he is a brave man: but, in confidence, gentlemen, who among us would dare to seize Rinaldini, were he even now present with us?

Townsman.—Not I, for one.

Advocate.—Yes, yes, a man ought to proceed cautiously, and first make sure of having assistance.

Townsman.—Suppose he got loose, and I were to lose my life, who would compensate me for my zeal? He certainly would not sell his life cheaply.

Notary.—I should like to have seen him once.

Rin.—Pardon me, gentlemen, but I have seen him.

Notary.—How?

Townsman.—What?

Advocate.—And have you really ——

Rin.—I am the Marquis Soligno. My estates lie in Savoy, and I am on a journey. Six days ago I fell into the hands of his people, and mine were overpowered. I was expecting every moment to be plundered, when Rinaldini himself appeared.

Townsman.—And what sort of a man is he?

Rin.—A little, fat, dark-complexioned man, with blue eyes, brown hair, Roman nose, and whiskers.

Advocate.—Well, I know not what to think of it.

Rin.—How so?

Advocate.—I have been told by others that he is tall and thin, with a smooth chin, black eyes and hair, and a Grecian nose. However, I must confess that a Roman nose is better suited to his way of life than a Grecian.

Rin.—I have myself seen and spoken to him, and he is exactly the man I describe. He searched me very narrowly, and I was obliged to give him all my ready money and everything

I had of value. He demanded a hundred sequins, which I gave him, and in return I had this letter of protection. See, gentlemen, here it is.

Advocate (reading).—Ah! the rascal!

"Viaggio Seguro,*

(Signed) "RINALDINI."

A man of few words! he is as saving of them as a minister of state.

Rin.—I thank God that I came off so well.

Townsman.—That you may, indeed, marquis.

Rin.—But it is unpardonable that the magistracy do not exert themselves more.

Advocate.—Only have patience; I have it from good authority that five hundred Tuscans and eight hundred men of the ecclesiastical troops are going out against him. They are to surround, and will most certainly take him.

Townsman.—How strong may his band be?

Rin.—No one can tell. Some talk of two hundred men; others say he is much stronger; they are all desperate fellows. Thank heaven I have got out of their clutches.

Towards evening Rinaldo quitted the place, and sent out Sebastiano and his people with orders to take Baron Rovezzo, alive or dead; and, if alive, to deliver him to Cinthio. His people he left in the neighbourhood of Montamara, and went himself in the dress of a pilgrim to Urbino. Here he learnt that Prince Rocella was indeed at large, but had been obliged to give securities to a large amount, and was soon to be examined. He inquired his address, and had the boldness one night to enter his chamber.

Prince.—Who are you?

Rin.—A pilgrim.

Prince.—So I perceive; but what would you with me?

Rin.—I am sent to you on a message from Rinaldini

Prince.—Heavens! What do I hear? You are he himself; now I know you.

Rin.—Yes, I am he. I know into what embarrassment I have brought you, and come to offer you my services.

Prince.—What would you do?

Rin.—With you! Nothing.

Prince.—I am lost if it be discovered.

Rin.—Fear not; only say how I can serve you.

Prince.—Man! what have you done?

Rin.—If I can save you and Aurelia with my life, I will.

Prince.—Your death cannot extricate us from this embarrassment. We are accused of an understanding with you. My child's honour is lost, and the public opinion is against me. Will you do me one favour, and then leave me and quit the town?

Rin.—If you would justify yourself from the suspicion of an understanding with me, deliver me up to justice; I will stay here.

Prince.—What advantage would thence arise to me? Treachery is unworthy of a true knight of Malta.

Rin.—Then I will myself surrender to the magistrates.

Prince.—Can that in any way better my condition?

Rin.—What shall I do?

Prince.—I know not.

Rin.—I must and will assist you on this occasion.

Prince.—My uncle, the cardinal, has taken the business in hand, and I hope the charge against me will soon be at an end.

Rin.—So much the better for your prosecutors.

Prince.—Rinaldini, would you stop the course of justice?

Rin.—Not of justice, but of injustice. Prince, if I cannot serve you, let me at least do something for Aurelia. Here are bills for ten thousand sequins, which I give as her portion in her new marriage.

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*In lieu of Sicure, for so Rinaldini wrote, though not pure Italian. I have seen some of these letters.

Prince.—A new marriage!

Rin.—The baron must, by this time, be in the hands of my party. If he is taken alive he will be shot, and Aurelia again be free.

Prince.—Free or not free, she will remain for ever in the convent. Give your money to the poor, we are none of us in need of it.

Rin.—Adieu.

Prince.—Oh, stay.

Rin.—What would you?

Prince.—To what end will you come?

Rin.—God knows; but I hope a good one.

Prince.—That you can scarcely expect.

Rin.—As God pleases; good night.

Prince.—Have you really loved Aurelia?

Rin.—I love her still.

Prince.—She can never be yours. Return to your proper station—forsake the course of life you now pursue, and apply your money to good works; in that dangerous course which you now——

Rin.—Prince, you know I am not easily frightened; yet my situation is wretched, for though justice has no torture for me, I have much within my own bosom. Farewell.

Rinaldo now left the town, and returned to the neighbourhood of Montamara, where his companions were. On the following day he received, by the hands of Nero, whom Sebastiano sent to him, the following letter:—

"The cursed baron is gone to Rome, and the nest is empty. Our good Altaverde, with three of his companions, has been trapped at St Leo, and thrown into prison with our other unfortunate friends. Cinthio must have had an engagement with the Tuscan troops; we are moving towards him. Come to us soon."

Rinaldo dispatched Alphonso to Cinthio, with instructions to liberate Altaverde, even though force were necessary. He also wrote to Rosalia to join Donato at his hermitage. He then gave orders to Nicolo and Nero to go to Rome to watch the motions of the baron, and continued a couple of days deliberating what he should do himself.

Rinaldo at length arrived, in a pilgrim's dress, at the convent of Montamara, where Aurelia was, and desired to speak to the abbess.

"She is engaged," said the portress, "in an audience before some commissaries who are come from Urbino."—"Has any accident then happened to the good mother?" said Rinaldo, with a pious sigh.—"She is innocently implicated in a bad affair with that notorious robber Rinaldini; besides, orders are given that, till her examination is over, no stranger be admitted." Thus saying, the portress, with a pious curtsey, shut the door.

Rinaldo now walked round the convent, and found the walls very high and strong; at length he laid himself down near a chapel dedicated to St Clair, which stood between three high poplars; and reflecting on his situation, deliberated what he should do, till at length he fell asleep.

When he awoke, he saw another pilgrim sitting opposite him, and apparently engaged in deep thought. On Rinaldo giving signs of having awoke, the other pilgrim turned round and said, "And can you sleep here thus peacefully and unconcerned?"

At this Rinaldo was alarmed; but endeavouring to recover himself, asked, "Is this then so dangerous a place?"—"Do you imagine it otherwise?"—"What can a poor pilgrim fear?"—"A poor pilgrim has nothing to fear, nor indeed he who covers his misdeeds with a pilgrim's dress."

Upon this Rinaldo sprang up, fixed his eyes on the other pilgrim, and cried out—"Cinthio!"

Cin.—Ha, do you know me at last?

Rin.—How came you here?

Cin.—Not of my own free will.

Rin.—What has happened?

Cin.—We are entirely cut to pieces.

Rin.—Is it possible?

Cin.—It is a fact. Surrounded on three sides, we fought like desperadoes, and cut down

many a brave fellow, but were so hemmed in, that scarcely half-a-dozen of us escaped from the slaughter.

Rin.—For heaven's sake where is Rosalia?

Cin.—I know not.

Rin.—Is Altaverde rescued?

Cin.—I know not where he is.

Rin.—Did you not receive my letter by Alphonso?

Cin.—I have not seen him.

Rin.—I sent him to you three days ago.

Cin.—At that time we were already dispersed.

Rin.—Altaverde with several of our friends are in prison at St Leo.

Cin.—Then he must seriously think of his last hour, for we cannot save him.

Rin.—Cinthio, what is to be done?

Cin.—Fly as far as possible. Are more of our party near?

Rin.—Nero and Nicolo are gone to Rome.

Cin.—Have they any fixed place appointed for them?

Rin.—Yes.

Cin.—Are you going to Rome yourself?

Rin.—Perhaps I am.

Cin.—Then tell me where I can find you. We will go to Calabria.

Rin.—What would you do there?

Cin.—I will collect a new company. Here there is nothing more for us to do, and in the woods and mountains of Calabria we shall be safer.

Rin.—And if you are again driven from thence?

Cin.—Then we will go to Sicily.

Rin.—Oh, Cinthio, were it not better to forsake this course of life?

Cin.—Not till it pleases fortune to put an end to it. You yourself will only continue till the police catches you—and then adieu to Rinaldini's head; Cinthio will stand in your shoes, keep whole countries in alarm, and throw their police into confusion.

Rin.—A most enviable lot.

Cin.—Do you know a better? To us an impassable bar shuts up every other course. That we are now pursuing——

Rin.—Is the worst of all.

Cin.—Then we ought not to have entered upon it.

Rin.—Ah, Rosalia!

Cin.—Your amours have done us no good. They have already brought us into many difficulties, and will at length cost you your head. If any one saw you wandering about among chapels and cloisters, he would rather take you for a beggar than a man of courage. Tell me where I can find our friends, for I will go to Rome; and if you should wish to travel through Calabria, I will give you a letter of protection.

Rin.—Go to Rome, if you please; I shall continue awhile in this neighbourhood. If I meet with any of our friends I will send them to you. I will soon follow you into Calabria.

Cinthio now left him, and Rinaldo went to Corinaldo. Here he unexpectedly fell in with three of his company, whom he immediately sent forward after Cinthio. One of them was of opinion Rosalia had taken flight among the mountains, and would soon appear, but he could give him no certain information.

He himself hesitated some time, totally unresolved what to do.

Seeing a crowd of people, he inquired what was the matter, and learnt that a suspicious person was about to be whipped out of the town with rods. This information he listened to with indifference, and was going to the pilgrim's inn, but soon perceived all the streets to be full; and as he attempted to crowd through a small square, which was full of people, he met the executioner's procession.

He involuntarily turned his eyes towards the unfortunate victim, and beheld the amazon Florilla, who had once belonged to his band.

She cast her eyes towards him, recognised him, and with a voice of grief cried aloud—"Oh, *Rinaldini!*"

On this involuntary exclamation, a confused outcry arose of—"Rinaldini! where is he? hold him fast!"

All was now in commotion; every one was crying out, or asking questions, or calling for the guards. The police officers broke through the crowd with drawn sabres, and pressed towards the place where Rinaldini actually stood, who, perceiving he was in the greatest danger of being instantly taken up as an unknown stranger, and that he could only save himself by some sudden expedient, seized a fellow who stood near him, and thrusting him towards the police-officers, cried—"Hold him fast! 'tis he! 'tis he!"

The officers of justice in stantly surrounded their prisoner, and the people crowded about them, exclaiming with triumph, "Rinaldini! Rinaldini!"

Thus they holloed and screamed, so that the poor fellow could not say a word; till at length observing him more narrowly, they perceived he was a butcher, well known throughout the town.

"Are you in your senses?" asked he, in a trembling voice; "do you not know me? Am I Rinaldini, or am I not?"

They now burst into a loud laugh; and beginning to be very riotous, cried out, "'Tis Giacomo, the butcher!"

The police-officers were enraged, and cried out, "Here is some deception; search the whole town; Rinaldini is somewhere among us."

"Search the town!" was now the universal cry; while the crowd broke the executioner's procession into disorder.

Meanwhile Rinaldini had entered a church; and having left his pilgrim's dress near a confessional, and put on a false nose, quitted the place in the dress of a peasant, which he wore underneath.

He proceeded without stopping through Paterno; and, notwithstanding his hunger and fatigue, pursued his way to Torette, near which, seeing a small house and two girls knitting at the door, he approached them, saying, "Can I take up my lodging with you till early to-morrow morning?"

"With us!" repeated the girls with surprise. "Aye, with you, if you have no objection."

"Surely you know that you are come to a Jew's house."—"Well, what signifies that?"

"People of your religion always shun our dwellings."—"In that they do ill. I am very tired; do not oblige me to travel further, but receive me into your house."

The girls seemed confused, and looked at each other; but at length one of them replied, "We are alone at present; our father is gone to Ancona."

"Are you afraid of me?" said Rinaldo.—"Ah, no!" replied she; "but——"

"As to propriety, be not uneasy. Who should know that I am here? besides, it gives me a particular pleasure to be received into such a house as yours."

"How so?"

"I will buy of you, if you have anything to sell that I want. I am not what I appear, and have plenty of money."

"Well, we will venture upon it; come in, therefore, and take us as you find us." Thus saying, they conducted him into a small room, where they set before him bread and cheese, wine, figs, and other fruit. Rinaldo pressed the young women to drink with him, and having emptied a couple of bottles, he thus addressed them: "You seem to be two kind and worthy girls, and I am concerned to perceive that you are poor. I will make you a present and better your circumstances. I am a noble Venetian, who have had an affair of honour with a rival, whom I had the misfortune to kill in a duel, and fled in this disguise, in hopes of avoiding pursuit." As he said this, he pulled off his false nose, which made the girls laugh; he then asked them if they had any clothes to sell.

"We have a couple of suits in the house," said Rachael, who was the elder of the two sisters.

"The rest," added Silpa, "my father has taken with him."

"Show me what you have," replied Rinaldo.

Upon this they brought out their stock of clothes, among which was an uniform, tolerably handsome. This Rinaldo chose, and then they sat down again to table, and emptied another bottle of wine.

When the day began to dawn, Rinaldo, having taken a light breakfast, dressed himself in his uniform.

Rachael.—Truly now, we can easily perceive you are a cavalier.

Silpa.—It fits you exactly.

Rach.—Indeed you look much better than you did yesterday.

Silpa.—Quite grand.

Rach.—And, by heavens, you have a couple of very pretty watches.

Silpa.—And very handsome rings.

Rach.—You must be a very rich man.

Silpa.—Who gave you these treasures?

Rin.—These peasant's clothes I give to you. Here is a bill of one hundred sequins, payable at Ancona, for my night's lodging; and for your entertainment and the uniform, take these five-and-twenty sequins in ready money. Are you satisfied?

Rach.—Oh, you are too generous; we shall not spend so much in a twelvemonth.

Rin.—Adieu, my good girls! think of me when I am gone.

Rach.—That we will.

Silpa.—We shall never forget your kindness.

Rin.—Heaven protect you!

Upon this he left his quarters, and, shunning Ancona, went to Poggia, where he bought a horse, and immediately hastened to the frontiers of the ecclesiastical state. Teramo, a place in the dominion of the King of Naples, was the first where he stopped and took up his abode.

Having provided himself with clothes at Aquila, he there hired a brisk lad, named Antonio; and, pursuing his travels as Count Mandochini, arrived at Naples. In this magnificent city he took handsome apartments, where he was lodged with worthy people, and had a prospect of the harbour. Here he lived very quietly, read a good deal, thought more, wrote verses, composed songs, and sang them to the guitar. After a time, however, he began to be tired of this uniform mode of life, which induced him to spend more of his time abroad, and to visit taverns and coffee-houses, where he heard the talk of the day. Sometimes he himself was the subject of conversation; and, upon these occasions, he joined in it with perfect confidence. Once a stranger brought news that Rinaldini was taken up at Ferrara and thrown into prison. Thus he heard them talk of him with more pleasure, and felt more secure in his present abode.

Among the various persons he daily saw at public places, he one day observed a man who wore a Corsican uniform, and was called captain. This man often sat a whole morning taking a dish of chocolate without speaking a word, except thanking those who saluted him, but never took the smallest part in any conversation, except by a nod; and whoever he met, always looked straight forward, being apparently lost in the profoundest reflection. He was remarked by every one, but seemed to observe no one.

Rinaldo one day approached him with as much caution as possible, but could not succeed in inducing him to speak. One day, however, he sat closer to him than usual.—"Sir," said he, "excuse my making one remark."

Captain.—Upon me?

Rin.—Upon you: every one observes you.

Capt.—That is possible.

Rin.—Perhaps you wish it?

Capt.—It never occurred to my thoughts.

Rin.—Perhaps some secret cause of affliction preys upon your mind?

Capt.—If so, I know nothing of it.

Rin.—Or, perhaps, some embarrassment makes you silent?

Capt.—I am not embarrassed.

Rin.—Cares, perhaps, oppress you?

Capt.—I have no cares.

Rin.—You go into company, and——

Capt.—I am always alone, even in the largest company.

Rin.—That is very bad.

Capt.—What can be better?

Rin.—Communication renders men happy.

Capt.—Not always.

Rin.—Conversation secures us against *ennui*.

Capt.—With that I am unacquainted.

Rin.—Then you are very enviable, and must be a great philosopher.

Capt.—Any man that will, may be a philosopher; and happy he who is.

Rin.—Your last assertion I believe, but not the first.

Capt.—That depends on you. In matters of belief men are not so very accurate, and the more they deceive themselves the happier they are.

Rin.—Self-deception is a dream.

Capt.—It is well for those who dream happily.

Rin.—And when they awake——?

Capt.—They wish, even for their dream's sake, to dream again.

Rin.—And thus the disappointment of their wish renders them unhappy.

Capt.—It depends on every man to be happy or otherwise. Every man is happy who seriously resolves to be so.

Rin.—Are you so?

Capt.—I am.

Rin.—Then you are a most enviable mortal.

Capt.—So I think.

Rin.—But as every man has his own ideas of happiness, so——

Capt.—So you wish to know what are mine?—they are somewhat out of the circle of this world.

Rin.—I understand you not.

Capt.—I am convinced of it. In general, men understand one another very ill, and these misunderstandings help to make out conversation in society, which would otherwise be as uniform and tedious as a choir of Carthusian monks. The best communication is between souls and spirits.

Rin.—Are you acquainted, then, with the world of spirits?

Capt.—Yes.

Rin.—How?

Capt.—As well as I know you.

Rin.—Know me? I do not even know myself.

Capt.—Oh, yes, in one respect, at least, certainly.

Rin.—Do you know then who I am?

Capt.—Yes; I say I do know you.

Rin.—Yet I never saw you till I came to Naples.

Capt.—I know it; I also first saw you here; nevertheless I know you.

Rin.—Then you are a sorcerer. Who told you who I am?

Capt.—My wisdom.

Rin.—Then you can see what is secret?

Capt.—And why not?

Rin.—You converse, then, with spirits?

Capt.—I am now conversing with a man who, I hope, has reformed himself.

As he said this he arose, paid his small account, and went; but Rinaldo had not the courage to follow him.

It may be easily imagined Rinaldo was not a little embarrassed, and though he had so long wished to become acquainted with this singular character, he now regretted he had ever spoken to him. Thus do men continually pant for the accomplishment of objects, which often make more painful discoveries than they conceived were possible.

"This man," said Rinaldo to himself, "knows who I am; the discovery of my name is in the power of this singular being. Who can this strange mortal be who does not consider human society as having anything in common with him? Ah, he shall come to an explanation with me, or I will annihilate this enemy to my repose."

Rinaldo frequented the Corso and other public places several days in search of this dreaded

Girl.—My parents have brought me up to be a singer.

Rin.—Aha! but your mistress; am I to call her mistress or miss?

Girl.—As you please. I am not to tell you whether she is married or unmarried.

Rin.—She is pretty, you say?

Girl.—It depends on your taste whether you think her pretty or not.

Rin.—She is a woman of quality?

Girl.—If you married her, you would not degrade yourself.

Rin.—Is she rich?

Girl.—You are doubtless rich yourself, since you make that inquiry. But why all these ceremonies? Will you see her or not?

Rin.—Where can I see her?

Girl.—To-morrow morning at mass, at San Lorenzo. She will be dressed in a green gown and black veil, with a gold chain round her waist, and a nosegay of orange flowers at her bosom. Will you come?

Rin.—I will.

The girl now departed; but Rinaldo was not long left to his reflections before the door again opened, and a man, wrapt up in a red cloak, entered. "Rinaldo," said he, "the message you have received is of no avail. You must not go to-morrow to San Lorenzo, to meet the lady who is so desirous of seeing you."—"Let me know," said Rinaldo, "who you are, if you mean I should follow your advice."

Upon this the stranger took off a mask, and opening his cloak, Rinaldo recognised the Corsican captain. He started back with surprise, and was about to speak, when the captain thus addressed him, "May you not safely follow the advice of a man who has sacrificed himself for you, and procured you the security and repose you enjoy at Naples?" Having thus spoken he left the room.

Rinaldo lay awake half the night, and arose earlier than usual, but did not keep his appointment at San Lorenzo. At the approach of evening the girl returned, and said, "You have broken your word; why did you not come?"

Rin.—I am mistrustful.

Girl.—Your mistrust is very ill placed.

Rin.—I will not come till I know the name of the lady I am to meet.

Girl.—Do not give yourself cause to regret that which others would so eagerly pant for. You have only to see her. If she pleases you, she will herself tell you her name. To-morrow she will again be at mass. Good night.

Soon after the girl was gone, the captain again appeared. "You must not go to San Lorenzo," said he.

Rin.—My worthy friend, I am not a child to follow you blindfold. If you would influence my conduct you must assign reasons.

Capt.—For that I cannot blame you; but you must rely upon my word, and not form with a stranger an acquaintance which will be of no avail.

Rin.—As yet you are yourself unknown to me.

Capt.—But you shall know me.

Rin.—Where?

Capt.—At Portici. But to San Lorenzo you must not go.

Thus saying, the captain departed. Rinaldo remained in profound reflection. When morning came, he was still unresolved. At length, though sometimes inclined to keep his appointment, he determined to break it.

In the evening the beautiful messenger again returned, and silently curtseying, delivered him a letter to the following effect:

"For the last time I ask a favour of you, which you cannot refuse me, if you are a cavalier, and possess the least principle of politeness. AURELIA."

When Rinaldo observed this signature, he gave the girl three sequins, and half beside himself exclaimed, "Tell the lady that I will come as surely as I exist. No envious fury shall prevent my keeping this appointment, even should I——"

"Forswear!" cried the captain; "none of these oaths, which you will never perform!"

"I will perform them."

"Be tranquil."

"No power in the world——"

"The police are not without runners!"

Rinaldo was now alarmed, and looked for the girl, but perceived she had quitted the room. He then threw himself into a chair.

Capt.—You are always proud and intractable; but remember that you no longer command, and must therefore obey.

Rin.—Who gave you power to command me?

Capt.—Who obliges me to save you at my own peril?

Rin.—That obligation is imposed on you by yourself.

Capt.—Ungrateful man! will you quarrel with your friend for so precarious a possession as a woman, and offend him to embrace a shadow? Besides, what can you expect from her? be it ever so exquisite, 'tis but love. In us, women but love themselves; we are their looking-glass, in which they admire their own reflection.

Rin.—You are a woman-hater.

Capt.—But I am your friend.

Rin.—Then you would not keep me from speaking to them.

Capt.—You are your own master; but I absolutely forbid it.

Rin.—If you wish for my compliance, assign some reason.

Capt.—I am no prophet; but the consequences will justify me. I see farther than you. My power——

Rin.—Your power! Give me a proof of it.

Capt.—That you shall have. Rise, and follow me to Portici.

Rin.—Give me the proof here.

Capt.—Art thou, the once courageous hero of the night, become a timid boy? Go, break your sabre, and take a wooden sword. I see through you. Now I permit you to see this woman. Learn to know her, and then also know me. Adieu.

Rinaldo passed a very uneasy night, and hastened in the morning, at the appointed hour, to San Lorenzo, but did not meet Aurelia. At length, however, he perceived her messenger, who giving him a wink, he followed her, and having quitted the church, she said—"My mistress desired me to make her excuses. It was impossible for her to keep her appointment to-day; but she requests you will follow me. I will conduct you to her."

Rinaldo, without further reflection, followed her out of town to a charming spot, where an elegant house stood in the middle of a garden. On entering, she conducted him through a beautiful hall, on the ground floor, to a chamber, where all the jealousies were down. Through this pleasing obscurity she conducted him to a smaller apartment, which was still more obscure. "Here," said the girl, as she showed him in, "you will find the lady."

He immediately perceived a female figure on a sofa, whom he approached, and throwing himself on his knees, seized her hand, which he covered with kisses, and exclaimed—"Oh, Aurelia, what a happy moment!"

"Happy, truly happy!" replied a soft female voice.

Rin.—Happier than I ever hoped to be.

Aur.—And yet you were so irresolute.

Rin.—I knew not that it was Aurelia.

Aur.—How!

Rin.—She whose image I shall eternally bear in my heart.

Aur.—Count, you——

Rin.—Thus are the most ambitious of my hopes unexpectedly realised.

Aur.—And have you——

Rin.—Oh, Aurelia, my life!

Aur.—I fear——

Rin.—What can she fear whom I adore?

Aur.—That which I have reason to fear.

Rin.—And what is that?

Aur.—That some misunderstanding has deceived you.

Rin.—How!

Aur.—You speak to me as though we were old acquaintance, and to my knowledge——

Rin.—That voice—by heavens!—no, you are not Aurelia!

Aur.—I am Aurelia, but cannot be the Aurelia you mean.

Rin.—Yes, my imagination has indeed deceived me; you are not Aurelia Rovezzo.

Aur.—Alas! I am not. Ah, good count, how much I wish I were. I have seen you and observed you, alas! with too much pleasure, and now I fear my admiration is turned to love. Now I am compelled to wish I had never beheld you. Oh, leave me to the torment you have caused, and pay your homage to your beloved Aurelia.

Rin.—And shall this obscurity which surrounds us never give place to daylight?

Aur.—Of what importance can it be to you to see the face of a woman to whom you are so indifferent? Continue, for my sake, to be a friend to a stranger, who now desires to be so for ever. Your Aurelia——

Rin.—Ah! I shall never see her more!

Aur.—No?

Rin.—How could my imagination so widely deceive me? My Aurelia languishes in a convent, and I have no claim upon her affections.

Aur.—I compassionate you, but let us put an end to this interview. We have both enjoyed a pleasing dream; at the moment of our separation we shall awake; the remembrance, however, will be left us.

Rin.—If the dream is past, let us change it to reality; permit me to behold the face from which such charming words proceed—the sound of your harmonious voice——

Aur.—If it be really so, it may compensate your stay; none but a lover shall see my face. Spare me the shame which the step I have taken causes; and now, enough of our adventure! Adieu, count.

Rin.—You are very cruel.

Aur.—Of that you at least have no right to complain.

Rin.—Permit me for once to behold your beauteous eyes.

Aur.—You have no claim to see them.

Rin.—Oh, charming stranger, the celestial harmony of your voice roots me to the ground! Do as you please, but I cannot quit this spot.

Aur.—Be not indiscreet.

Rin.—I cannot go; I know not what thus overpowers me.

Aur.—Curiosity.

Rin.—No, no.

Aur.—Caprice.

Rin.—No, 'tis more powerful than either; I cannot but pay my homage to this beauteous stranger.

Aur.—With a divided heart.

Rin.—I love Aurelia Rovezzo as my sister, but shall never possess her.

Aur.—And do you, therefore, reckon on possessing me?

Rin.—Now I am able to go.

Aur.—Then go.

Rin.—You have formed a bad opinion of me.

Aur.—That I will not say; but how will your continuing here benefit either of us?

Rin.—What harm can arise from my paying you my homage?

Aur.—Oh, count! I am not so vain as you perhaps imagine. This imprudent step—but I have already confessed to you my motives.

Rin.—Are you then entirely free?

Aur.—As yet I am.

Rin.—So am I.

Here a pause ensued; after which, Rinaldo kissed the hand of his fair incognita, and gently pressing it, felt hers still more gently pressing his. Aurelia sighed, and her sigh was repeated by Rinaldo.

Rin.—How happy might we be, both equally free and unrestrained!

Aur.—Count, I beg of you to leave me. You have brought me into a situation in which I *ought not to be.*

At length, however, the door opened. The lovers started, and looking up, beheld the Corsican captain.

"I can have no doubt," said he, "of what has passed, and I wish it may only give two persons cause of repentance."

The lady covered her face with her hands, when the captain, turning towards her, quietly took them away, and said, "You have torn yourself from me, and given yourself up to this man; may he feel all the good and evil of being beloved by you. I renounce you, and demand nothing back but the ring I gave you as the pledge of my fidelity."

Upon this she silently took the ring from her finger, and returned it. As the captain received it, he added, "This house and garden you will this day leave;" then quitting the apartment, he shut the door.

"How shall I understand all this?" said Rinaldo, with embarrassment.

"I will explain it all," said she, "when we meet again."

"When and where will that be?"—"My maid will come for you as soon as I can see you."

Rinaldo now arose to depart, when Aurelia fell upon his neck, kissed him with ardour, and taking her ring from her finger, which she put on his—"I call this ring," said she, "as I now may you, mine."

Rin.—Oh! you know not, nor can you imagine, how dear this happy moment may perhaps cost me.

Aur.—It has no price. I have given it you. The Corsican will not fight you.

Rin.—That is not what I fear.

Aur.—What, then, can you fear?

Rin.—He is master of my most important secret.

Aur.—Fear nothing—he is no traitor. I have been false to him, and yet fear nothing from him. Had he acted to me as I have to him, I would infallibly have plunged a dagger in his heart: I love without bounds, but if I am betrayed, blood must flow as sure as I exist.

Rin.—You are a most dangerous person.

Aur.—Not to you, if you love me; to him who is the object of my choice, I shall ever be faithful. The captain I never chose or loved; fortune alone united me to him, and I have at length found an opportunity of breaking my chains. But you I love, and give myself up to you entirely. Oh! love me as I love you, so shall we both be supremely happy.

Rinaldo at length departed, and returned home like one in a dream. He now feared a visit from the captain, but received none. Three days passed, yet he neither saw the captain, nor heard from his beloved inamorata.

VOLUME II.—CHAPTER I.

On the fourth day, as Rinaldini walked with pensive steps beside the harbour, some cannon announced the arrival of a ship, whose boat presently put off, and landed passengers. Rinaldo walked towards the strangers, and the sailors and porters who accompanied them, when he was suddenly seized from behind, and on turning round, Rosalia, in man's clothes, threw herself into his arms.

Surprise and terror made Rinaldo silent; but Rosalia burst into tears, and exclaimed—"God be thanked! I have at last found you."

To avoid observation, Rinaldo returned home, whither the two boxes Rosalia had brought were carried also.

Rinaldo sent his servant out, shut the door, and when Rosalia had recovered herself, she related to him the following incidents:—"On that dreadful day when we were surrounded on all sides, I had the good fortune to escape. I fled to the mountains, and came at length to Avezzo, where a worthy old woman received me. Grief and fear now affected me so deeply, that I was taken ill, and miscarried. The strength of my constitution, however, overcame my illness; and as soon as I recovered, I went to Leghorn, where I took ship for Naples, where I had a strong hope I should find you. Thanks to the Holy Virgin, I have succeeded. In these

boxes I have brought as much of your buried treasures as I could find in the Apennine mountains, and I rejoice heartily that I am enabled to restore them to their owner."

Rinaldo tenderly embraced her, thanked her for her fidelity, and instantly resolved to quit Naples as soon as possible.

"Now, dear girl, I am both rich and happy," exclaimed he aloud, "and so shall you be also."

Fatigued with her voyage, Rosalia had lain down to repose, when the beautiful girl from Rinaldo's fair inamorata entered with the following letter:

"She who sincerely loves you—she whom you must no longer call Aurelia, but your own tender Olympia, wishes to enjoy the happiness of seeing you at her house; the girl will conduct you to her."

Rinaldo reflected a moment, and at length resolved to accompany the girl, in order to avoid giving his tender signora, whose revengeful spirit he well knew, the smallest suspicion.

"As I am about to quit Naples so soon," said he to himself, "I may at least see her once more, as it will probably be the last time."

Thus he accompanied the messenger of love to a beautiful house scarcely a hundred paces from his own residence: she received him in the most ardent manner, but Rinaldo assumed a considerable degree of coldness.

Olympia.—Is it thus you return my passion?

Rin.—It is four days since I have had the pleasure of seeing the beauteous Olympia.

Olym.—To me they have seemed an eternity.

Rin.—Indeed!

Olym.—Oh, speak not thus; I might never have seen you more.

Rin.—And why not?

Olym.—You shall hear; from this time there is not an hour of my life but I devote to you. Ungrateful man, if you did but know what I have done!

Rin.—May I know it?

Olym.—What do you imagine?

Rin.—Nothing, and therefore I would know what it is you have done which you estimate so high; my Olympia will also pardon me if I——

Olym.—Not a word more—this coldness is misplaced, where love and happiness expect you. I can bear a man's ill-humour if I love him as I love you; but this coldness I cannot bear; I know what claims I have on you, and I must confess the manner in which you now speak to me offends me. Now defend yourself.

Rin.—I wait first for Olympia's defence.

Olym.—Indeed!

Rin.—Mine shall immediately follow hers.

Olym.—How artful!

Rin.—Four whole days——

Olym—Speak not of days, when love is our only concern, nor tax my feelings by the striking of the clock; that which endures for ever cannot be counted by measures of time—I insist on hearing your defence.

Rin.—And I on yours, for my right and the offence I have received are of longer date.

Olym.—Are you really offended?

Rin.—If I were not, I must be indifferent to you.

Olym.—Will you not permit me to conceal my secret?

Rin.—No.

Olym.—Have you no secrets from me?

Rin.—That question shall be answered at a future time.

Olym.—Just so shall your question be resolved.

Rin.—This concealment increases my suspicion.

Olym.—What suspicions can you harbour?

Rin.—Those which a lover harbours from whose sight his beloved has hid herself for some moments; I talk not of four whole days.

Olym.—'Tis connected with another history, and must be concealed.

Rin.—*Now. then,* I am satisfied.

Olym.—Oh, why that bitter laugh? Alas! I understand you too well.

Rin.—I am glad of it.

Olym.—Do not provoke me to extremes.

Rin.—What would you do?

Olym.—For you I have——

Rin.—Was all you have done of your own free will or not?

Olym.—Alas! it was. But you know what I have sacrificed to this passion.

Rin.—If it can be compensated by gold——

Olym.—Ah, wretch that I am! I love you, and you would pay me with gold! Take from me all I have; make me as poor as a beggar; I will follow you barefoot; and were you yourself to become poor, I would steal for you. Yes, for you I would be carried to the scaffold, and rejoice that I, and not you, were to be the victim. If you can talk thus, you must measure my passion by your own sordid standard.

As she said this, she threw herself with vehement emotion upon a sofa, and Rinaldo silently paced to and fro across the chamber.

Olympia's maid now came in, and having set out a table with a cold collation, and some fruit and wine, left the room.

After a long pause Olympia asked—"Will your lordship please to eat?"—"With all my heart," replied Rinaldo. Upon this, without speaking another word, chairs were placed, and they sat down and ate. Olympia then filled a glass, and taking it in her hand, said, in a tender tone, "To our reconciliation!"

Rin.—If Olympia will confess herself in the wrong, and that she has unjustly offended me by what she last said?

Olym.—I will do everything you wish; I love you so very dearly. Be it so. Now, not a word further on that subject.

Rin.—But the four days must first be explained.

Olym.—I could not till to-day receive you decently. On the very day when I parted from you so happy, I quitted the house which the captain had taken for me, spent my time in a miserable habitation, and was not settled in this apartment till to-day.

Rin.—The place where thou wast present would have been the temple of love; why was I not admitted there?

Olym.—I was ashamed to receive you in an apartment, and part of the town——

Rin.—Where you were yourself? If you were in want of anything why did you not——

Olym.—Of that, not a word.

Rin.—Did you live at the expense of the captain or not?

Olym.—In some measure.

Rin.—You are not a Neapolitan?

Olym.—I am a Genoese of noble birth.

Rin.—And yet live here?

Olym.—Had you heard my history, you would know the cause.

Rin.—I will hear t now.

Olym.—As soon as you have rendered yourself worthy of my confidence.

Rin.—What do you know of the captain?

Olym.—That he is a singular, mysterious man, full of secrets, and priding himself on his great wisdom.

Rin.—And have you no proofs that he really possesses it?

Olym.—Some.

Rin.—What are they?

Olym.—I am afraid to discover them to you.

Rinaldo was about to reply, when a man, who was muffled up, came without ceremony into the room, walked up to him, and delivered him a letter. Olympia beheld this silent personage with an eye of suspicion, while he took from the table a glass of wine, which he drank, and then silently quitted the room.

Rinaldini opened the letter, which contained these words:—"Rinaldini is in danger;" then tore the paper in small pieces, and sprang up from table.

"In God's name, count," said Olympia, in the utmost anxiety, "what is the matter?"

Rinaldo took his sword, kissed her hand, and said, "To-morrow, my dear Olympia, you will see me again," and then hurried to the door. Upon which Olympia sprang up, embraced him, and begged him to stay; but he kissed her with ardour, and said, in a tender voice—"Be calm; we shall meet again to-morrow." He then tore himself away, quitted the room, ran down stairs, and hastened home, where he had scarcely arrived, before the same person who had just delivered him the letter, entered. They looked at each other a considerable time without speaking, till at length Rinaldo broke silence, and said—"Captain, I understand your hint."

"What the devil!" said the other, "I never have been captain yet; but we have known each other when you were captain." Thus saying, he took off a mask, and discovered himself to be his old companion Ludovico.

Rinaldo pressed his hand and said, "Whence came you, my brave youth?"—"That I will tell you," replied the other; "but first give me something to drink, for I am extremely thirsty."

Rinaldo now brought out some bottles of wine, and Ludovico related the following incidents:—

"The last time we were attacked, when you were not with us, the artillery played upon us more heavily than it ever had before, and a terrible slaughter was the consequence. I came by circuitous paths from one town to another, as secretly as possible, till I arrived here, when I found a relation, whom justice has in like manner driven from place to place, and who has introduced me to a set of fellows that would steal the devil's nose from his face if he had one. They are mutually bound to each other, and I was received into the gang. Thus I earn my living by various ways and means. I saw you a few weeks ago, and beheld you with great surprise, but was perfectly sure you were the same person as had been our brave captain. 'Thunder and lightning,' thought I, 'how comes he here?' I would have asked you yourself, but it was open daylight, and we are not fond of showing ourselves by day, for the sbirri have hawk's eyes. You were gone immediately; but I knew not where you lived, and since then I never could meet with you. I began to think you were over the hills and far away, when I unexpectedly met you one night, with a girl of my acquaintance."

Rin.—How? Do you know the girl?

Lud.—Know her? yes, by heavens.

Rin.—Who is she?

Lud.—Oh, you must know that well enough, since you were in her company.

Rin.—I know her but slightly.

Lud.—She is now in the service of the lady at whose house I found you.

Rin.—I know that; and if you know nothing more, you are no wiser than myself.

Lud.—Enough. But I know she is very good-natured.

Rin.—That I know not.

Lud.—Then I know more of her than you. She is exactly like her mistress.

Rin.—How? Signora Olympia was——

Lud.—Oh, heavens, you are neither the first nor the last of her friends, but now it is dangerous. Seeing this, I thought it my duty to warn you, and wrote the letter which I brought you myself. I am glad you attended to it, for let me be shivered to atoms if Prince della Torre will put up with a joke or an insult. He has given many a man his quietus when he least expected it.

Rin.—But how comes the prince in question?

Lud.—In the most natural way in the world. He is the friend of the lady you were visiting, and is most cursedly jealous.

Rin.—Ludovico, I can scarcely believe this.

Lud.—Never again call me comrade if I tell you a lie. I must know something of him, as I have received his pay for a whole month, and might perhaps have had his orders to give you your dose. That, however, I would never have done; devil take me if I would had I been reduced to beggary, or even burnt upon the rack.

Rin.—The lady, however, cannot long have been acquainted with the prince?

Lud.—These four days.

Rin.—That is possible.

Lud.—'Tis a fact. That is not her own apartment where you saw her to-day. But perhaps you keep her.

Rin.—By no means. I have only known her these five days.

Lud.—Then you do not know her yet, nor do I think you would in five times five years. She is a cursed artful woman. She has served a certain captain too a pretty trick.

Rin.—Do you know this captain?

Lud.—Yes.

Rin.—And who is he?

Lud.—That is known only to the devil.

Rin.—Then you do not know him.

Lud.—Oh, yes; I know a good deal of him.

Rin.—As for example?

Lud.—He is privately the good friend of every fellow like me in Naples. They all hang upon him like links of a chain. He is now in the monastery of the Benedictines, with a great apparatus. I know not what scheme he is upon.

Rin.—What apparatus?

Lud.—He calls up spirits.

Rin.—Real spirits?

Lud.—That is best known to him and the devil. I have not been there.

Rin.—Ludovico, we are still good friends?

Lud.—Thunder and lightning! do you doubt me?

Rin.—Then, in confidence, I am not without my company.

Lud.—That may be; but the rogues are certainly not here.

Rin.—In Calabria.

Lud.—That may be. There is something to do there.

Rin.—A fine country for us! Cinthio commands in my absence.

Lud.—Thunder and lightning! I must go there.

Rin.—I will give you money.

Lud.—Bravo! and I will take half-a-dozen good fellows with me, who will never give in. Curse me! this is a bad life we lead here. Little money and little to eat; and then a noise and parade about every trifle, as if it were of the greatest consequence; the sbirri always at our heels, and the gallows before our eyes. 'Tis a wretched life! Here is my hand. I will go to Calabria.

Rin.—Very good! I will give you money for your travelling expenses.

Lud.—But tell me what you do here?

Rin.—I am recruiting.

Lud.—Leave that business to me. I am better acquainted with the kind of people here that will answer our purpose.

Rin.—Well, get every one you can. Cinthio is waiting for recruits.

Lud.—He shall have them.

Rin.—And now a word in confidence. Should not the captain——

Lud.—He shall know of it.

Rin.—I do not mean that.

Lud.—What then?

Rin.—I am thinking whether he may not perhaps, by fair words, be removed to Calabria.

Lud.—That can hardly be. He lives here among connections of too high rank.

Rin.—But think of it.

Rosalia now awoke; which Rinaldo perceiving, opened the door of the cabinet where she was, and called her out.

Ludovico was astonished at beholding her; but told her he was rejoiced to see her again in good health, and whispered in Rinaldo's ear, "Signora Olympia is prettier."

Rinaldo smiled, gave him some money, and put an end to the visit. Ludovico, however, asked Rosalia several questions relative to her escape; and having emptied his glass, and promised to come again soon, went away half drunk.

The next morning, as Rosalia was assisting her beloved Rinaldo to dress, she said in a soft

voice, "My dear Rinaldo, if you really love me—if you love me but half as much as I love you, oh! grant my ardent request. Associate no longer with people of Ludovico's stamp, and let us quit Naples as soon as possible. Let us go to some other country, where we shall no longer fall in with old acquaintance of this kind; and if you abandon me, leave me not in a country where, perhaps, I may come to some disgraceful end. Ah! all I have ever done is to love you; that is my only crime, if crime it be; oh! let me bury it in an honourable grave."

Tears now burst from her eyes, and Rinaldo, who was much affected, embraced her, saying, "I know how to value your sincere and honest heart, and I feel all that your love for me deserves. What you desire I have already resolved to perform; and before three days are past, will sail, provided I can find a ship ready to take her departure for Spain. But should no such opportunity offer, we will go in the meanwhile to Sicily; Naples we will leave as soon as possible; 'tis more important to me to go than you imagine. Ludovico's associates are no longer mine; and as long as I am in the same place with him, I am in his power, and must flatter him more than I like. Be not uneasy, but continue to love me.

Having said this, he took his sword, and went out to the apartments of Olympia.

Rinaldo found Olympia's apartments shut up, which reminding him of what Ludovico had told him, he was desirous to convict her of the double residence spoken of by him. But how was this to be accomplished? On this he reflected as he went to the promenade.

"Well," thought he at length, "she may live where she will for me. Of what importance is it? Why should I trouble myself with any of her concerns? I will leave Naples, for now I know who she is."

As these reflections passed, he approached the church of San Lorenzo, which he involuntarily entered; perhaps through some faint presentiment or suspicion.

The first object he beheld as he entered was Olympia, who, having said her prayers, shut her book, and then rising, took the arm of a cavalier, who gave her some holy water, and accompanied her out of church.

Rinaldo followed her at a distance, and at length entered the house to which her companion conducted her. Here he met on the stairs Olympia's maid, who screamed aloud.

"Do you also live here?" said Rinaldo, bitterly; then passing her, without waiting her answer, opened the first door he came to, and walked through an anti-chamber into the room where Olympia was sitting on the sofa with her cavalier.

On seeing this unexpected visitor, Olympia blushed, while the cavalier looked alternately at her and at the bold stranger with the utmost surprise. Rinaldo was the first who came to himself, and now perceived how imprudently he had acted; but as it was too late to reflect on steps already taken, he endeavoured to recover himself, and making a silent bow to both of them, gave Olympia a significant look, fixed his eyes somewhat firmly on her companion, and with another silent bow retired. But he had scarcely reached the door of the anti-chamber when he heard that of the inner room open, and the cavalier call after him—"A few words, sir, if you please."

Rinaldo now turned round, and with perfect tranquillity asked—"To what effect?"

"What do you want here?"—"That which I have found."

"But what was the object of your visit?"—"A conviction which, as I said before, I have found."

"I demand a clear explanation."—"Make one for yourself."

"Sir, I demand it at the point of the sword."—"At the point of the sword you shall have it."

"Prince," cried Olympia, "I beg of you suffer me to explain;" for this was the Prince della Torre, of whom Ludovico had spoken.

Prince.—Here is some secret, of which I must have the key.

Rin.—The signora will give it you.

Olym.—This gentleman——

Prince.—Who is he?

Olym.—He is an acquaintance of the captain, and probably wished——

Prince.—What does he wish?

Olym.—Probably he had something to communicate to me.

The prince now cast a very expressive look at her, upon which she seemed confused, turned pale, and threw herself into a chair.

"Are you not in danger of fainting?" said the prince in a tone of raillery; and imitating her, threw himself in like manner into another chair.

Rinaldo, with the utmost indifference, inquired—"May I go, or shall I stay?"—"Do as you please," replied the prince, with precisely the same indifference; upon which Rinaldo seated himself on a third chair opposite to them, and contributed to form a silent group, till Olympia's maid came in; but she stood in mute astonishment, and forgot what she was about to say. At length she suddenly turned round, and hurried out.

The prince now sprang up, pressed his hat down upon his face, and left the room without saying a word.

Olym.—What have you done?

Rin.—You know what you have done. You have imposed on me, cheated me, deceived me, and betrayed me, and I know, perhaps, more than you suspect. Signora, remember the scene when the captain found us together; remember what he then said; now, like him, I demand my ring again.

Olym.—The captain found us in a very different situation from that in which you now see me.

Rin.—It depended but on me to have found you so. I need only to have waited a little longer. I beg to have my ring. I will purchase it of you.

Olym.—Wretch that you are! I want not your gold, as long as others will give something for yourself. Which is of more value, your ring or your head?

Rin.—How?

Olym.—Both are in my power, most noble count. I shall expect from you, within four-and-twenty hours, one thousand ducats, for I must leave Naples. If you will not give it me, another will give me as much for you. Do you understand me? My maid will receive the money. Here is your ring. Once more—do you understand me? Good bye.

Rin.—If you imagine——

Olym.—No excuse, count, or I will call you by another name.

Rin.—By the captain's, perhaps?

Olym.—I know who is now before me, and persist in my demand. If you do not choose to pay me, another will pay for you.

Rin.—You shall have the money; only confess you have deceived me.

Olym.—Why should I confess, when you believe it already? It can neither tranquillize you, nor make you more uneasy than you appear to be already. I leave you to pay the money, and you may wish me a happy journey. Thus we shall be quits; and if you are wise, you will also leave Naples, or the prince may destroy us both. Besides, you have much to fear from the captain; for if he cannot save himself any other way, he will seize upon you as a dernier resource, and turn you into money. On this speculation of the captain alone rests present security. You are his *corps de reserve*. But now I anticipate him, and seize the treasure in his stead; for I know no other way of saving myself. When may I send my maid?

Rin.—Whenever you please. I wish you a good journey.

Olym.—The same to you, most terrible ruler of the Appennines: ha, ha, ha! Rinaldini! 'Tis very hard, truly, that such a terrible fellow as you should be afraid of a poor foolish woman, who is as rich in love as she is poor in pocket; and who, for a couple of paltry ducats, could send you in chains to Tuscany. But to what extremes will not the want of money drive the best of men! Me it might compel to betray, and you to steal.

Rin.—I think, signora, that neither of us has any need to read lectures on morality.

Olym.—But one word more as to myself and the conduct I have held. When I learnt from the captain who you were, I perceived his intentions; and as I loved you, and love you still, I thought it my duty to protect my lover against him.

Rin.—I am obliged to you.

Olym.—This was the cause of my acquaintance with the prince. I would have taken an

opportunity to have brought you acquainted with each other, but you have marred all my plans. It was chance, however, that brought it about, and therefore we must not reproach each other.

Rin.—Thus, then, I am indebted to your kindness.

Olym.—'Twill be requited by the sum I mention.

Rin.—If it can be requited, it shall. Have we done?

Olym.—I hope so. But do you know anything yet that——

Rin.—I have nothing more to say, except that I have now gained a new piece of knowledge of mankind.

Olym.—Indeed! Then turn it to advantage.

Rin.—That I certainly shall. When we are alone, it will be an amusement to think of each other. This permission I at least purchase.

Olym.—Surely; and should we meet anywhere at a future time——

Rin.—We will be utter strangers.

Olym.—Agreed.

Rinaldo now took his leave, and hastened to the harbour; but in his way very unexpectedly fell in with the captain, who gave him a wink, in consequence of which he very unwillingly followed him to a retired place.

"Let us not," said the captain, "talk of old affairs; for what has happened has happened, and what is past is past. We have only to do with the present. I am in want of money, and on this occasion I apply to you, because I know you have what I want. Lend me two thousand ducats, for which I will give you my silence as security; and if you know how to make use of Signora Olympia, as Prince Della Torre apparently does, I borrow on a still better fund."

"I know," said Rinaldo, "how much I am indebted to you, and what I have to thank you for. I know the part you have taken in my fortune, and am much indebted to you. Therefore when I present you with two thousand ducats, I beg of you to accept it merely as a small mark of my heartfelt gratitude. I am not, however, provided with so much ready cash as you may imagine; but I will turn some valuables into money, and you shall have what you want within two days."

"Friend," said the captain, "my necessities are pressing. I had rather have the money to-day than to-morrow or next day."

"Well," replied Rinaldo. "I will procure it by to-morrow evening, when I shall hope to see you at my apartments."

He now, with a silent bow, took leave of the captain, who looked after him as he went towards the harbour, where lay a Genoese ship, that was about to weigh anchor in an hour and sail for Malta.

Rinaldo spoke with the captain, and told him he wished to take his passage with him; to which the captain replied, "I will receive you on board with pleasure; but I must inform you of what you do not perhaps know, and which I have this moment learnt. About an hour ago an order has been published to receive no passengers on board any ship without a passport from the police, under pain of confiscating the ship's cargo. I know not the motive of this order; but in all probability there is some suspicious person in the city, and this is the method taken to catch him."

"Most probably," returned Rinaldo with pretended indifference but palpitating heart: "However, I will procure such a passport."

Meanwhile Rinaldo returned home with the utmost anxiety, and like one in a dream. "If I am so well known here," thought he, "I had better go back and hide myself in my woods and caves."

He found Ludovico in his room talking with Rosalia. To them he related what had happened at the harbour, at which Rosalia trembled, and Ludovico was confounded. They looked at each other and were silent.

At length Rinaldo seemed to recover from his alarm. "Ludovico," said he, "you are a very honest fellow; to you I will entrust this girl and this trunk. Conduct her to some place of safety, and I will quit Naples as secretly as possible. You will follow me to Cosenza

where we will at all events meet; for neither of us must quit it till the other arrives. I know that I am certainly betrayed, and must save my person. You will travel as privately as possible."

He now put on his pilgrim's dress, took with him as many jewels as he could conveniently pack up and conceal about him, and set off without delay. Ludovico swore fidelity to him, and Rosalia burst into tears.

Rinaldo found no impediment to quitting the city, and took the road to Salerno, whence, without venturing to stay there long, he pursued his way to Clarimonte, where, being extremely fatigued, he was obliged to take up his quarters for some time, and in a miserable inn struggled with the pains of his body and the anguish of his soul. His feet were very sore, much blistered and swelled. He wished himself dead, yet dared not to put an end to his life.

A very worthy physician attended him, assuaged his corporeal pains, and endeavoured, though with little success, to cheer his mind with friendly conversation.

At length Rinaldo again set forward, and hastened to the mountains of Mormando, over which he travelled towards Cosenza, passing many a hermitage that reminded him of his friend Donato, as every monastery did of Aurelia, and every wild mountain scene of the life he had led among the Appennines.

Once being oppressed by the heat of the day, he threw himself down beneath some poplars, and abandoned himself to peaceful contemplations, till at length he was suddenly alarmed by a noise near him. On looking up, he beheld two men standing by him, whose appearance resembled that of his former comrades.

"Who are you?" said one of them."—"A pilgrim, as you see," replied Rinaldo.

"Where are you going?"—To the miraculous image of the holy virgin at Cosenza."

"Can you do nothing better?"—"I am ill and weak, and hope to find relief there."

"We will lighten your burden at least. Take out your purse, and give it us."

"Who are you?"—"We are men who live by our wits."

"I have no money."—"We don't believe you."

"Then you are mistaken."—"No expostulations! We have no time to lose in disputing."

"Have you ever heard of the celebrated Rinaldini?"—"Oh yes."

"He suffered no pilgrims to be plundered. His friend Cinthio once met——"—"Cinthio?"

"Why do you take so much notice of that brave fellow's name?"—"Why should we not? 'tis the name of our captain."

"Your captain? Where is he? Lead me to him. He knows me; I once rendered him a service, which he promised to return. Now is the time for him to keep his word."—The two thieves looked at each other with surprise, and Rinaldo got up, took his pilgrim-staff, and was about to set off, when one of them cried, "Not a step from this spot!" and held a pistol to him.

"I would be carried to your captain," said Rinaldo, firmly; "he would not suffer me to be robbed."—"Not so bold, fellow!"

"Do you fear I should inform against you? I give you my word I will not. You are silent. I will keep my word. I honour you highly when I request you to conduct me to Cinthio."

"Oho! upon honour."—"I swear to you that Cinthio will reward you handsomely for conducting me to him. I am a man."—"That we perceive, but will not carry you to our captain. Your purse, or a ball through your brains. Choose!"—"Fire if you dare! I am Rinaldini!"

Upon this they dropped their arms and fell at his feet.

"I will keep my word," said Rinaldo. "Lead me to your captain, and I will, besides, give each of you ten ducats."

They now sprang up, greatly rejoiced, waved their hats in the air, kissed his hands, and showed him the way; but when they perceived how tired he was, they joined hands and carried him to Cinthio's abode, which was a vast cavern. Cinthio was now encamped in front of it, in a tent, where he had thrown himself on a field-bed, and was thinking of Rinaldini at the very time when this singular group approached.

His people now set down their pretended pilgrim before the field-bed, and one of them said,

"Captain, this is a valuable load; the sbirri would not have brought him in so easy a manner. Here he is; look at him yourself, and tell us who he is."

Cinthio cast his eyes upon Rinaldini, but could not utter a word, for a sudden sensation ran through his soul, and an unaccountable trepidation robbed him of his speech.

"Do you no longer know me?" said Rinaldo, in a faint voice.

Cinthio now rushed towards him, and pressed him to his bosom, while tears trembled in his eyes and bedewed his darksome cheeks. Silent and confused stood his companions around him, while he cried aloud, "Do I then see you again, Rinaldini, my friend? Do I again hear you speak; and is it not a dream?"

Upon this every one exclaimed, as from one mouth, "Long live the great Rinaldini, and Cinthio his friend, our brave captain."

Rinaldo now related his story to his friend, who heard him without interruption, but when he had concluded, said, "See, Rinaldini—will you believe me now, when I tell you we can never resume our places, or be thought of any value in society?"

Rinaldo.—I am now convinced. Experience has proved it.

Cinthio.—Let us live in the woods and mountains, and avoid the high-towered cities. In Calabria our business will thrive; nature seems to have formed that country expressly for us. The farther we penetrate into it, the better we shall be, nor shall we ever want for a living. I am at the head of eighty men, and can have more whenever I please. But now I resign my place of captain——

Rin.—Keep what is your own, and let me inhabit one of the most retired corners of Calabria as a hermit.

Cin.—Are you in your senses? May you not be discovered, and, thus defenceless, be thrown into the power of the law? From the story you have told, I learn that you have an enemy whom you ought to fear. If any one tracks you out, it must be the captain, who has resolved to live at your expense. But if you were at the head of my eighty men, he would not hurt a hair of your head. As a defenceless hermit, you may soon be taken, and compelled to yield to superior force. Mankind pursues you—the police have set a price upon your head, and your own name follows you everywhere like a crime. At the head of your comrades alone you will find esteem and safety. Can you not choose?

Rin.—Let me but recover my strength, and then I will think of it. Here is money—divide it among your people, and set me at rest, that I may again be Rinaldini, for my spirit is gone from me, and my strength is no more.

Cinthio now set off with his company, and removed to a ruined castle, where he had arranged some rooms, in which he lodged his friend, who, after much care and attention, by degrees recovered his strength.

He now informed Cinthio that he must go to Cosenza, and for what reason, Ludovico and Rosalia having directions to wait his arrival there. But Cinthio would not admit of it, and desired him to write a letter to Rosalia, which he resolved to carry himself. Rinaldo, unable to oppose his arguments, at length permitted his friend to go to Cosenza; and in the meanwhile took the command of his company, anxiously waiting his return.

A week after his departure, some of the band brought Rosalia, together with Rinaldo's trunks and packages, safely to him. Ludovico also accompanied them, but in chains. Cinthio was not with them, and some of his people delivered to Rinaldo a letter from him to the following effect:—

"Rinaldo, I resign to you the command of my company. When I see you again I will tell you where I now am, and what I have done. I have taken one hundred ducats out of your stock, which I may, perhaps, employ in executing my present plans; if not, they shall be returned. Ludovico will himself tell you the reason of my sending him to you in chains; you will then best know what you ought to do with him. Adieu. CINTHIO."

Rinaldo now called Ludovico forth, and Rosalia reclined upon his bosom.

Rinaldo.—Why do you bear these chains?

Ludovico.—In consequence of my treachery.

Rin.—Treachery!

Lud.—I am a villain, and have discovered myself to Cinthio. From you I wait my sentence, for 'twas you my treachery concerned.

Rin.—Me!

Lud.—Hear my confession, and judge me according to my deserts. 'Twas I betrayed you at Naples; through me the accursed captain knew who you were.

Rin.—Is it possible?

Lud.—'Tis the truth—doubt it not. But when I came to my senses I repented of what I had done, and set about repairing my fault; you know how I have since then served you. With Rosalia I quitted Naples in the greatest danger, and have brought her to Cosenza. Your property I have respected; and with repentance for my accursed discovery, I have martyred myself, like a repentant sinner with his flagellation; but at length I was compelled to let all come out, and I confessed. Cinthio chained me—and I deserved it; yet it was of no use, for I should, at all events, have come to you to hear my sentence from your mouth. Pronounce it and punish me

Rin.—I forgive you.

Lud.—Captain!

Rin.—I forgive you all.

Lud.—Let me be flogged! let me be hanged! Forgive me not so easily.

Rin.—I am in safety. Rosalia and my treasure are secure; what more can I wish? You have acted honourably with regard to my property; these services you have rendered me, and I forgive you. If you wish it you may stay with me, for I am satisfied you will not again betray me.

Lud.—Indeed I will not. See, captain, I cannot help these tears, though 'tis a shame. Do punish me, however, in some way, or I can never look you in the face again. I cannot rest if you let me off so easy.

Rin.—Well, then, you shall be punished; remind me of it four weeks hence, in which time, perhaps, I may find a proper punishment for you.

Lud.—I will not fail to remind you.

Rin.—Now go free and acquitted to my people, to whom you belong. I rely upon you in case of danger.

Lud.—My poor life shall be at your command.

Rin.—I will call as many of my people as are here in the neighbourhood, and take off your chains, that they may know I hold you to be innocent.

Lud.—Captain, if I forget that kindness, I will suffer my head to be cut off.

Rosalia's joy at her meeting with Rinaldo exceeded the power of description, for her whole soul seemed to exist but in his, and for him alone she lived; while he speedily recovered under the care and attention of his beloved. His mind also daily regained its cheerfulness, and he enjoyed the beauteous scenes of nature with increasing sensibility.

This peaceful tranquillity, however, was less pleasing to his companions than to himself, and one of them thus addressed him in the name of the rest:—"Is it really the great Rinaldini that lies here thus inactive, and only toying with his girl? Do not, at least, encourage us to follow this example. If you would be our captain, find us employment."—"I am not inclined," replied Rinaldo, "to send you on the road to tear from the poor traveller the last penny which is to support him on his journey. I would rather give you so much myself without force; but if you can point out any enterprise that is worthy of me, I will presently show you that I am Rinaldini."—"To judge of this," replied Albonicorno, for that was the name of the orator, "is not our part; 'tis enough that we are not here to sit with our hands in our bosoms, like useless idlers. Thunder and lightning! shall we have the famous Rinaldini for our leader, that we may bury ourselves in the mountains? This we might do without your assistance. Our wine bottles are as empty as our pockets."

Rin.—Well, get some wine from the best of the monasteries.

Albonicorno.—How is that to be done?

Rin.—That is your affair.

Alb.—If we had a captain——

Rin.—If a battle be necessary, your captain will be there.

Alb.—Who would fight with such fellows; men that would throw their breviary at the head of the devil himself?

Rin.—Does that frighten you? It may be done with perfect ease and quiet. Take the abbot, and you will have plenty of wine.

Alb.—That is easily said. But do not these gentlemen always sit at home, like a hen upon her chickens? Give us something better to do.

Rin.—To-morrow I will look about in the valley; perhaps something will fall out, or something occur to my mind that may help you to some work. Leave it to me; I am in fortune's good graces.

The next morning Rinaldo, according to his promise, went into the valley, and approached the town of Fiscaldo at the time when the inhabitants were celebrating the feast of their patroness with dancing and singing. Booths were erected, and filled with various goods and stages, from which monks were selling amulets, consecrated chaplets of roses, and other reliques. The poor Calabrians crowded around these stages, and brought thither their little savings, which were all swallowed up by the great box of the spiritual empirics, whose stock, though large, was insufficient to satisfy the continual demand of the crowd that continually flowed towards his stage.

"These impostors," thought Rinaldo, "shall not carry all this treasure home." He therefore sent Ludovico back, and gave him directions to Albonicorno and some others to be on the watch, pointing out what they were to do, in order to take their box of treasure from the monks. This plan was executed towards evening.

In a corner, where stood an image of the holy Virgin, some poor Calabrians, who had nothing else to give, showed their piety and devotion by performing a concert to the holy Virgin. Rinaldo joined the party, expressed his approbation to the pious musicians, and gave the poor people some money. "Because," as he said, "the holy Virgin had revealed to him that she did not desire to have anything gratis, and that he should pay for her.."

The musicians thanked him very gratefully, took the money, and brought it to the spiritual shop, where it was all thrown into the great box, and thus found its way back into the hands of Rinaldini.

Two ladies in masks, who were walking with a cavalier on the market-place, now attracted Rinaldo's attention; and he had scarcely begun to approach them, when one of them appeared also to remark him, fixed her eyes upon him, and evidently endeavoured to get near him, till at length she whispered, without being noticed, "Welcome, Count Mandochini!"

Rinaldo started, and asked, "Who speaks?"—"An acquaintance," answered she, and rejoined her company.

Rinaldo paused, and fixed his eyes on her as she went till she was lost in the crowd; then stepped aside, and while examining his pistols, some one clapped him on the shoulder. He turned round with affright, and perceived it was Cinthio. "Cinthio! are you here?"—"Not only I, but some of your acquaintance."

Rin.—That I have already heard.

Cin.—Indeed!

Rin.—A lady in a mask called me by the name I used at Naples, Count Mandochini.

Cin.—Well! and do you not guess——

Rin.—What should I guess?

Cin.—In Cosenza I have been watching your acquaintance, and have followed them everywhere. They are both here, and I think they will soon be in our power.

Rin.—Who?

Cin.—Who! How can you ask that question? Who but the artful captain and the beautiful Signora Olympia.

Rin.—Is it possible?

Cin.—'Tis certain. They seem to live with a gentleman in the neighbourhood, whom they will probably join their heads to plunder. But we will in our turns plunder those cutpurses so completely, that they will never forget us.

Meanwhile came Bramante, one of his company, hastily towards him, saying, "Captain, yonder is a gentleman in company with some other gentlemen and ladies, who speaks out

clearly the name of Rinaldini! One of them called to two sbirri, and another was talking with an officer of militia! I hastened hither to inform you of these circumstances!"

"You now perceive," said Cinthio, "that I said no more than the truth. I know the roads round this place. Bramante, watch for them. We shall go to the hermitage of San Sepolcro. If you meet with any of our band, let them join you. You will wait for us near the Poplar Grove, under the hermitage."

Bramante immediately set off, and Cinthio led Rinaldo through some ruined aqueducts out of the town of Fiscaldo.

Meanwhile Bramante met three of his companions at the Poplar Grove; they were upon the heights of San Sepolcro, when they heard the drums beat, and, immediately after, a confused noise of bells, upon which the whole valley was in an uproar. Perceiving this, they passed the ridge of the mountain, and, near their quarters, fell in with a joyous party of their people, who had taken away two boxes full of money, apparently very heavy, from the spiritual shops.

Soon after their arrival, they packed up their baggage and departed; and, passing the mountain, left a guard of three men by San Paolo, and, further on, a guard of six men. They then went to the heights of San Lucito, the avenues to which they strongly manned. Here, amid dreadful rocks and precipices, they pitched their tents.

It was midnight ere Rinaldo, who was extremely fatigued, threw himself upon his bed. Rosalia trimmed the lamp, and lay down beside him; but Rinaldo had scarcely closed his eyes before a loud scream from Rosalia waked him. He started up, and would have inquired what was the matter, when a tall white figure appeared, standing at the entrance of his tent, and having twice beckoned with its finger, disappeared.

Rinaldo sprang up, went out of the tent, found the guards awake, and those who were nearest to the tent knew not what to answer when he inquired if nothing had happened. He returned to the tent, and found Rosalia much dejected, for she remembered a similar appearance in the Appennines. Rinaldo also became very pensive. At length he fell asleep, and was waked by Cinthio at break of day.—"I will take twenty men with me," said the latter, "and reconnoitre in the valleys."

When he was gone, Rinaldo called Ludovico, and said, "Now, Ludovico, is the time for your punishment. The captain and Signora Olympia are somewhere in the neighbourhood of Fiscaldo. Go, and do not return till you bring me intelligence where they are, so that we may drive them out."

"That shall soon be done," said Ludovico, and immediately set off.

Rinaldo now looked out for a couple of secret places, and, accompanied by Rosalia, buried his most precious jewels in the earth. This done, he gave the signal of departure, mustered his corps, found it to be fifty-six strong, and well armed, gave the word, and descended into the valley. He had not marched far when he perceived the beating of drums in the distance. Upon this he halted to secure a retreat, but soon heard firing in the distance, and therefore sent spies to the heights.

The firing approached, and at length intelligence arrived from his spies that Cinthio and his people were fighting with the militia and the sbirri in the valley of San Lucito. Upon this he sent twelve men to reinforce him, and followed them himself with the remainder.

The firing became more rapid as he approached nearer to the scene of action. But now some men came flying towards him, which gave him hopes. He was still advancing, however, without suspecting the enemy to be near, when his corps was fired on from the heights. On looking up, he perceived that they were occupied by militia; upon which he quickened his march, and at length arrived just in good time in the field of battle.

Cinthio's corps had been very roughly handled, and scarcely twelve men were now fighting, like desperadoes, against a force ten times their strength; and, had they not been a band of robbers, their achievements would have procured them the name of heroes.

Rinaldo and his men now rushed upon the soldiers and sbirri with such fury, that, being surprised at this sudden onset, they were obliged to give back, and Rinaldo followed them step for step. Meanwhile Cinthio collected his little troop, brought those who were dispersed together with the men at various posts, and thus again was thirty men strong.

With them he hastened to reinforce Rinaldo, whom he rejoined, reaching him as he was

retreating. But the militia having brought their cannon with them, had made such good use of them, that Rinaldo had scarcely twenty men to oppose them.

When Cinthio arrived, both corps united and returned to the charge. Suddenly about thirty dragoons attacked them in the flank, and in a moment Rinaldo, with two of his men, were cut off and surrounded. Rinaldo broke his sabre, his pistols were discharged, his comrades fell by his sides with musket shot, and he was obliged to surrender. This capture cost sixteen of the soldiers their lives.

Enraged at the death of their companions, the troops vehemently beat Rinaldo, who received their blows without giving any sign who he was. At length two of them bound him between their horses and took him to a castle, where he was thrown into a dark dungeon, and, after an interval of some hours, obtained some straw to lie on, and some bread and water for his support.

Being extremely fatigued, he sank upon his wretched bed, overpowered with grief and sorrow, but neither wept nor complained. At length, being quite exhausted, he fell asleep. He had not, however, been long in this situation before he dreamed that Rosalia was standing by his side. He awoke, started up, perceived a light in the prison, and saw a lady in a veil standing by him. "Who art thou?" cried Rinaldo.

"Be not afraid," said she, "and answer me truly and frankly. You may repent, should you refuse."

"What would you know of me?"

"Are you Count Mandochini?"—"I am."

"Then you are Rinaldini," said she, and left the dungeon.

Rinaldo now began to reflect what this might signify, when the gate of his prison opened, and an old man entered with bread and water, which he left and went out.

Day was now succeeded by night, and Rinaldo lay in silent obscurity on his straw bed, when the door was again opened, and the lady in a veil entered with a light.

Rin.—Who is here?

Lady.—The object we have once loved, we cannot easily hate. We have seen each other once, and were happy. How is it possible I should forget it?

Rin.—Heavens! I should know that voice.

Lady.—At Naples you cheated me of the money for my journey, but I am now better off than you.

Rin.—Olympia.

Olym.—Do you know me now?

Rin.—What am I to expect of you?

Olym.—Magnanimity.

Rin.—Olympia!

Olym.—I saw you as you were brought hither, and knew you. In the castle they know not what a precious bird they have caught, otherwise you would certainly not be left unchained. It depends on me to procure you fetters.

Rin.—Then let me have them.

Olym.—Obstinate man!

Rin.—What would you here?

Olym.—Guess.

Rin.—Torment me! That I can bear. Pity me! That I desire not. Let me die! That is my wish.

Olym.—Proud man! I will save you.

Rin.—You!

Olym.—Yes—I.

Rin.—Olympia!

Olym.—I, who loved you, and who love you still. But I am not disinterested.

Rin.—That I believe; but I have nothing by me to give you, except this purse.

Olym.—Money I want not; I have purses now for you. I only wish for a written acknowledgment that you are indebted to me for your life.

Rin.—Has that yet happened?

Olym.—It shall and will happen.

Rin.—How?

Olym.—As I please; as I have planned it.

Rin.—Well?

Olym.—Oh, my dear betrayer! what would I not do for you? I will even now take you out of this dungeon. At the castle-gate a servant is in waiting for you, with a horse loaded with clothes for your accommodation. In the port is a Genoese galley ready to sail for Sicily, on board of which you will go to Messina as the knight Della Cintra, under which name I have procured you this passport. In Palermo you will go to the house of the Marchese Romano, and give him this letter, which will procure you a kind reception; and here is a purse of one hundred ducats.

Rin.—Money I want not; I have some with me, and also some jewels.

Olym.—Well, then, I will take my money again. But the writing I have asked you for I must have. Here is a pencil and paper, with which you must contrive to write it as well as you can.

Rin.—Here is the writing; but how shall I——

Olym.—No delay; we will talk of that another time.

Rin.—But if I——

Olym.—Lose no time; you are in the castle of the Prince Della Torre, whom you know. If we are discovered, we are both lost. Give me a kiss, and then follow me.

Rinaldo now quitted his dungeon, and passed through the court to an open gate, where having again kissed his inamorata, he left the castle.

A few paces from it he found the horse and servant waiting for him, and having instantly mounted, set off in a hard trot. They soon reached the harbour, where he gave his attendant some money, who, having loosed the portmanteau from the horse, instantly returned. Rinaldo dressed himself behind a hedge in a travelling dress, which he found in the portmanteau, where he packed up the clothes he had taken off.

The sun was now down; and Rinalda, taking his portmanteau under his arm, approached the port, where he showed his passport to the officer on duty, and was allowed, without further impediment, to pursue his way.

He immediately went on board the promised galley, which, having weighed anchor, set sail, while Rinaldo cast a lingering look towards the shore, and sighed out, "Ah, Rosalia! Rosalia!"

Having arrived at Messina, Rinaldo had scarcely taken up his quarters, and dressed himself, before he hastened to the Marchese Romano, to deliver Olympia's letter.

He found the marquis surrounded by company, who were on a visit at his house, and to whom he introduced him. The marquis having read the letter, received him very kindly, and presented him to his company, which consisted of princes, counts, countesses, and baronesses, who were delighted with their new acquaintance, but had not the remotest idea they had so notorious a captain of banditti in their illustrious circle.

The cavalier Della Cintra was now asked innumerable questions, his answers to which gave general satisfaction, and even attracted the regards of some of the most beautiful of the women. Every one confessed the chevalier was a very handsome man, and the men considered him as an accomplished travelled gentleman. They offered him all kinds of attentions and services, and the Marquis Romano would not be satisfied till his guest promised to take up his abode in his house.

Thus in a few days was the scene of our new-made knight's adventures changed from a den of robbers and murderers amid the crags of inhospitable rocks, first to a loathsome dungeon, and then to the best society Sicily could afford, in the gorgeous saloons of a magnificent palace.

Before the company parted, Rinaldo received various invitations, after which his host requested his company to a tete-a-tete.

They now adjourned to a pavilion in a beautiful garden, where having seated themselves, the marquis, pouring out some wine, drank, "To our better acquaintance!" After a few more glasses and toasts, they began to converse as follows:—

Marquis.—Our friend Olympia has recommended you to me so strongly, that I scruple not immediately to call you by the honourable title of friend.

Rin.—You do me uncommon honour.

Mar.—A man of such talents and of so much science as you has doubtless the best possible claim to it, and the more nearly society are acquainted with him, the more it must redound to your honour and to their advantage. All my other guests, who are men of good heads and hearts, certainly expect to find in you an associate abounding in wit and courage.

Rin.—I beg of you to explain yourself.

Mar.—That I will readily do:—There exists a certain grand association in the world, which, however convenience sometimes breaks, is ever re-established by men of sense and talents, through whom it will become universal. In the state of the church, in the dominions of Naples and Sicily, a great number of men are known to each other through the means of this establishment, and for the promotion of its objects.

Rin.— I am convinced that from you I shall hear the truth.

Mar.—You do hear it. Reciprocal wants generate reciprocal aid and reciprocal participation. 'Tis enough to say they know each other, and can reckon upon finding friends every where.

Rin.—A very comfortable assurance.

Mar.—You think so?

Rin.—I feel it so.

Mar.—Then you are one of us.

Rin.—As to an universal alliance of friendship, I am; but I seem to be the only gainer by it.

Mar.—By no means; we gain with and through you.

Rin.—My worthy friend, you know not——

Mar.—I know what I am permitted to know. You pass as yet with this society for the knight Della Cintra till we learn more of you.

Rin.—Marquis! you know also——

Mar.—I salute you as a man who is feared.

Rin.—Has Olympia, then——

Mar.—The secret of your true name remains as safely locked up in my breast as in your own.

Rin.—But what can induce you to introduce me, whose name and actions are so much decried, into a society whose members are so noble, so illustrious, and free from every spot of plebeianism?

Mar.—What can hinder us from calling you friend, especially if we point out to you a new sphere of action, the consequences of which will be quite sufficient for the completion of our plan? A little interest, however, must prevail even in the best of the society. All this time will explain to you.

Rin.—I have the advantage of you in this game, for I can but gain by it.

Mar.—Through you we also win. Profit and gain are obedient to our call. Upon that rest at ease. Shall we call one another brothers?

Rin.—If I may.

Mar.—I give you the brother's kiss.

Thus ended their conference for the present, and the marquis's family assembled to supper.

Rinaldo was now full of thought, hoping for the development of a riddle, the explanation of which he could not discover.

Thus he lived in a continual round of company and visiting, amid the gayest entertainments and the most splendid balls, hurried on from one amusement to another, so that he had scarcely time to reflect for a moment on his present situation.

Among the ladies with whom he became acquainted, were two who particularly attracted his attention; a very beautiful young lady, whose name was Laura, only daughter of Baron Denongo, one of the best families and richest fortunes in the island, and the Countess of Martagno, a very accomplished woman, of most agreeable manners, and though less beautiful than Laura, uncommonly interesting. She was a widow in her twenty-second year, and possessed of a considerable jointure.

These two ladies not only interested our cavalier, but they were said to have been by no means indifferent to him.

At a *fête* given by the countess, the ladies having collected together to hear some music

Laura, taking a guitar, performed a song, which was much praised and admired. The countess then took the instrument, and sang with universal applause, except from Laura, whose silence, however, was only observed by Rinaldo.

The countess looked for his approbation in his countenance, and then turned her eyes towards Laura, who cast hers on the ground. This circumstance struck the countess, but she sprang up, and gave the signal for the dance.

The first lady to whom Rinaldo offered his hand was Laura, who appeared very happy, and whose eyes often interchanged glances with Rinaldo's. Of this the countess was not unobservant; she saw more than pleased her, and more than she wished to see.

The dance being finished, she came forward, and said she wished to find a good partner in a fandango. She soon found one, and performed that fascinating dance with the utmost grace, never taking her eyes from Rinaldo, who stood among the spectators near Laura, by whom he was asked how he liked the dance.

"So well," replied he, "that I would not on any consideration in the world that my beloved should dance it with any other man than me."

"'Tis well," replied Laura, smiling; "that sentiment concerns neither you nor the countess."

"Certainly," replied the cavalier, composed.

The dance being concluded, the countess threw herself into a chair, fanned herself with her handkerchief, beckoned Rinaldo to her, and said, "How do you think I dance the fandango?"—"So well," replied he, "that I envy the man who was your pratner."

"Then you shall dance it with me next," said the countess, smiling.

Rinaldo was about to reply, when the countess's partner came up to her, and reproached her with having pressed him too hard.

"What harm can that do you?" said the countess, evidently disconcerted.

Rinaldo waited not his answer, but turning round, entered into conversation with the Marquis Romano.

Presently after the countess came up to him, and asking him to follow her, took him into a small room, not unobserved by Laura, who drew near the door, where she threw herself on a sofa with an air of indifference, though with the most eager attention and curiosity.

"Knight," said the countess, "some letters for you have been confided to my care. I deliver them to you, and you may read them here alone, if you would avoid being disturbed."

Rin.—How so?

Countess.—By thinking of this or that affair, or perhaps of this or that lady.

Rin.—How do you mean?

Countess.—I mean nothing, only I think so.

Rin.—But I know not what——

Countess.—What the lady's name may be; certainly not Martagno. She must have a very tender name; something romantic and heroic, as Laura or the like. I, alas! am only Dianora, which is not a poetical, still less a sentimental name. But do not suffer yourself to be disturbed.

Having said this, she left the room, and Rinaldo opened the letter, which was from Olympia, enclosing others for Marquis Romano and Baron Malvento. That to himself was as follows:—

"Dear Knight,—I hope this finds you well, for you are at least in the best hands in the world. In virtue of your written promise, I desire you to show your gratitude to me by obeying the Marquis Romano in all things. He will tell you that it is time to introduce you to the old man of Fronteja, which you must by no means neglect. Perhaps we shall soon see each other.

"I must inform you of the news, namely, that the band of the notorious robber Rinaldini is completely exterminated. Nine of them who had been taken alive, were yesterday shot at San Lucito. They all declared that Rinaldini himself had been cut to pieces, and fallen by their side. Every one rejoices that this dangerous man has been thus destroyed, as indeed he must necessarily have been, since his little troop was surrounded by one thousand four hundred men. One Cinthio, indeed, cut his way through, together with a few of his party; but people are gone in pursuit of him.

"Another piece of news is, that a certain captain of your acquaintance has been almost

killed by one Ludovico, who stabbed him in twelve places. He lies now dangerously ill; but the assassin has escaped.

"Adieu. Remember who still loves you.—OLYMPIA."

Rinaldo had read the letter, and folded it up, when Laura entered the room, in search, as she said, of a friend, whom she did not find, notwithstanding which she stayed there.

A conversation on indifferent subjects now arose between them, during which they unexpectedly came into the gallery leading to the saloon. Here they walked on, still talking, and at length came into a brilliant apartment, where the table was set out.

Lau.—It must be confessed the countess lives well here. Her house is certainly one of the best in Messina.

Rin.—On that subject I cannot judge.

Lau.—You may take it on my word. Besides, she is a lady of uncommon wit and taste, and very amiable. 'Tis said she is to be married to the gentleman with whom she danced the fandango.

Rin.—Indeed!

Lau.—Such at least is the common report.

Rin.—I hope she will be happy.

Lau.—Why are you still unmarried?

Rin.—I have enough to live decently myself, but not to maintain a wife.

Lau. Then you should marry a woman who has a fortune of her own.

Rin.—Provided she loves me.

Lau.—That is presupposed. How long do you intend to stay at Messina?

Rin.—As long as I like the place.

Lau.—Well, and how do you like it?

Rin.—Very much.

They had now returned along the gallery into the drawing-room, which Laura presently left unobserved. Meanwhile Rinaldo delivered the enclosed letters from Olympia, and returning back into the small room in thoughtful mood, threw himself upon a sofa. Here he continued unobserved till the sound of trumpets called him to table, though both Laura and the countess had missed him, and each anxiously sought him everywhere but in the right place.

At table, Rinaldo, being a stranger, was placed next to the lady of the house, while Laura sat on the opposite side. His reflections made him absent, and he behaved very ceremoniously towards his neighbour, the marchioness, which secretly gave Laura the greatest pleasure.

Baron Malvento now entertained the company with the fate of Rinaldini in Calabria; and the conversation becoming general, every one delivered his sentiments.

Laura said—"This highwayman died too honourably, and he ought to have been broken on the wheel;" which gave Rinaldo a sensation by which this merciless girl lost a part of her influence upon his heart. The countess said—"Rinaldini was a great man, and had he but commanded an army, would have obtained everlasting fame;" and this generous sentiment gave the countess that place in his heart which Laura had just unconsciously abandoned.

The Marquis Romano told the company his friend the cavalier had assured him he had known Rinaldini, and upon this every one overwhelmed him with questions.

Laura asked him what he thought of this king of thieves?

"As for me," said Rinaldo, "he treated me very well. I was in his power, and he did not abuse it."

"How did he look?" said the countess.

"More noble than his course of life should seem to permit," replied Rinaldo.

Meanwhile Laura continued to abuse Rinaldini, till the conversation, much to his satisfaction, turned upon another subject.

The remainder of the night passed away in dancing; and day now beginning to dawn, Rinaldo did not return home, but took a walk among the country houses and gardens in the neighbourhood of the city, to enjoy the beauties of the morning, which now with dewy wings shed its beamy lustre over the flowery vales. His feet brushed away the dew, forming a line

across the meadows, and he looked for an eminence, from which to command a view of the surrounding country. The golden rays of the sun played over the pearly herbage with innumerable brilliant colours. Heaven and earth appeared newly roused from refreshing sleep; and Aurora, from her roseate gate, seemed to lead on a new train of ideas and sensations in Rinaldo's mind. He leaned against a lofty pine, cast his eyes over the brilliant vale, and was affected even to tears with the beauties he beheld. Even in those tears the rays of the sun were beauteously refracted, and his cheeks glowed with the purple hue of heaven.

Meanwhile the harmonious murmur of a distant waterfall soothed his ear, and upon the hills, which were covered with cattle, the rural pipes of the merry shepherds gave life to the enchanting scene.

"Ah!" said Rinaldo, sighing, "that I were still among the shepherds, as once in my father's farm! Oh, that I could, in gay and happy innocence, like these peasants, mingle the sound of my pipe with the enchanting breath of the zephyrs! What if I were to go to some distant country, and, resuming my shepherd's crook, conceal myself in the solitudes of a Spanish sheepwalk? Oh that I could again partake of this happiness! What still detains me in the vortex of the world, where, surrounded by dangers, I shall certainly one day become a public sacrifice to justice? Yes, I will leave these Sicilian vales, and exchange them for the steepy mountains of Spain." Here he burst into a flood of tears. "Alas! unhappy that I am!" continued he, with a deep sigh, and again paused; but a hermit, who was then ascending the hill, accosted him in a friendly manner, saying, "You are unhappy, you say; whence is your unhappiness? Does it arise from your own fault, or that of others?"

"From both," replied Rinaldo, with a half-suppressed sigh.

"Learn, then, to suffer," continued he, "for that is the lot of humanity. Heaven has various ways, and can point out to you a smooth and pleasant road, except when it is better for you to walk in rugged paths. Remember, all that happens is for the best."

"Do you receive alms?" said Rinaldo, suddenly.

"To give away," replied the hermit. "For myself, I have enough, as I want but little. But some men there are who have not even that little."

"There are," said Rinaldo, putting a purse into his hand. He then immediately descended the hill, and returned home.

Here the marquis informed him he was about to take a journey of two days, and recommended him in the meanwhile to the care and attentions of his wife and daughter.

Rinaldo also received two invitations, which, however, he refused, that he might be able to pursue his own reflections.

The day after the marquis's departure, he went out into the fields to his favourite spot. Night now began to throw her mantle over the valley, and the rays of the setting sun painted the mountain tops with purple, till they disappeared in twilight, while the evening breeze wafted balsamic odours across the plains. The flies buzzed and swarmed around, and the distant shepherds' pipes mingled with the tinkling bells of the lowing herd, while the languishing tones of the love-warbling nightingale filled the air with melody, and every branch became vocal to the breeze.

Rinaldo stopped at the garden door of a beautiful villa, and finding it open, went in. Here the sweets of an orange grove were wafted towards him, and a chorus of feathered songsters greeted him from branches crowded with blossoms, as he approached the house, which stood in the middle of the garden. Here he met a girl, lightly clothed, and inquired of her, "To whom does this beautiful villa belong?"

"To the Countess Martagno," replied she.

He was struck with this intelligence, but remained silent. The girl, however, still looked at him, expecting a second question, which Rinaldo observing, asked, "Is the countess here?"

"She came this morning," replied the girl, who then went down the avenue.

Rinaldo had not yet determined whether to go or stay, when he perceived a female figure moving in an orange grove: nor had he resolved whether to proceed or return, when the lady came out of the grove, and called to him, "Chevalier, can I believe my eyes?—is it yourself or your apparition?"

It was the countess who thus addressed him; and, as it was now too late to recede, Rinaldo advanced towards her with a silent bow.

"For heaven's sake!" continued the countess, "how did you find my villa?"

Rin.—As men often find many other things—by chance.

Countess.—You might, however, have been more gallant than to tell me I am indebted only to fortune for this pleasure.

Rin.—The debt would be but small.

Countess.—At least equal to the chance you mention.

Rin.—Then we are quits.

Countess.—If you wish it, we are; but, when I reflect, we are not; for the same chance had only to conduct you a few steps farther to have transferred the debt to Laura, whose villa is near mine, and she is now there; or, perhaps, you have mistaken the house, and are too gallant to acknowledge it. I will send a servant to show it you.

Rin.—If you wish to send me away——

Countess.—I would willingly keep what fortune has thrown in my way, but not at another's cost.

Rin.—Yet you must do that if you would receive me from the hands of chance.

Countess.—If chance and Laura are not the same, let it be called by any other name, and you are welcome.

As she said this, she gave him her hand and conducted him into an arbour, where a guitar and a book lay upon a table. Here they seated themselves; and, after a long pause, the countess said, with the utmost simplicity, "What were we speaking of?"

"Of the beauties of the evening," said Rinaldo, smiling; upon which the countess burst into a laugh.

The conversation, however, still halted, and they arose, took a turn in the garden, talked of indifferent subjects, and at length approached a pavilion, which became the scene of a very interesting interview.

Countess.—I rejoice much to see you here so unexpectedly, especially as you are the only person who could chase away the low spirits with which I am oppressed.

Rin.—I thank you for this compliment.

Countess.—'Tis the truth.

Rin.—Then I am infinitely obliged to the truth. But, may I ask, what causes you these low spirits?

Countess.—I will tell you. One man, I cannot bear, wants to force himself upon me, while my family want to force upon me another.

Rin.—And you would not marry again?

Countess.—At least, neither of these men.

Rin.—Then choose a third, who neither forces himself upon you nor is forced upon you by your family, provided you do not dislike him.

Countess.—I would either have a man who gives himself to me, or none.

Rin.—That depends on you.

Countess.—The accepting may, but not the giving.

As she said this, she stretched out her hand, which sank upon Rinaldo's; upon which she suddenly withdrew it: but Rinaldo instantly seized it, and, softly pressing it, felt his own pressed in return by that of the countess.

A loud conversation in the avenue leading to the pavilion at length awakened the lovers from the dream of bliss, and, starting up, they perceived Laura and some other ladies enter the pavilion.

The countess received her friends with evident marks of embarrassment; nor did any connected conversation take place till the ladies inquired for their carriage, and took their leave.

As Rinaldo handed them in, Laura whispered to him, "I congratulate you;" and the countess said aloud, "I shall see you again to-morrow, chevalier:" to which he assented with a compliment. The carriage drove off, and Rinaldo returned home, musing on what had passed.

Rinaldo repeated his visits to the countess so frequently, both in town and country, that Laura had now no longer a place in his heart. Meanwhile the marquis returned from his excursion, and spoke much of the old man of Fronteja, to whom he promised to introduce him.

Upon Rinaldo's inquiring who this old man was, the marquis replied, "He is, perhaps, the wisest man of the age; a philosopher who is deeply versed in the most secret of the mysteries called *krata repoa*, and has unfolded things of which nothing certain has yet been known."—"But I do not perceive," said Rinaldo, "of what use his acquaintance can be to me, for I have no desire to be initiated in the mysteries of krata repoa, for which I have neither genius ncr inclination."—"The grand object for which we have united," replied the marquis, "requires a knowledge of it."

Rinaldo was silent, and the marquis pursued the subject no farther.

The whole family were invited to pass the evening at the countess's villa; but Rinaldo was the first who arrived there. The company were regaled in the pavilion, where every one was very gay and happy, after which they adjourned to some benches on a grass plot in front of it, where they were about to amuse themselves with games, when two servants with flambeaux introduced a stranger, who, they said, wished to speak with the marquis.

The marquis arose, and the stranger approached; but the instant he perceived Rinaldo, he put his hand to his sword and exclaimed, "Ha, assassin! have I found you?"—"Who dares insult me?" said Rinaldo, and drawing his sword, perceived his antagonist was the captain.—"I dare!" said the latter, gnashing his teeth.

They now instantly engaged; but a shot from the grove wounded the captain, and he fell. The confusion was now general, every one was in motion, some screaming and lamenting, and some running to and fro, while the servants came in armed and increased the uproar.

The countess, however, had the presence of mind to pull the chevalier into the pavilion, which was now vacant, and shutting the door upon him, locked him in. Rinaldo, who knew not how all this had come to pass, continued alone there during two hours in anxious expectation, and greatly wondering how the affair would end. At length the door opened, and the countess entered.

"Is the captain dead?" said Rinaldo.—"He lies dangerously wounded in the house," replied the countess. "But without inquiring," continued she, "any further into these strange events, my only care at present is to save you. Far in the mountain of Remata I have a castle, where no one will find you or even look for you. Thither you must instantly fly. Here is a letter to the warder, in which I have described you as Baron Tegnano, and a relation of mine. A horse is ready saddled for you at the garden gate. Adieu! you shall hear from me shortly, and as soon as possible I will come myself."

Having said this she embraced him, and moistened his cheeks with tears. At length she tore herself from his arms, conducted him to the garden gate, where Rinaldo mounted, and took his uncertain way, according to her directions, towards the country.

The night was beautiful, the full moon illuminated all the hills, and a solemn stillness reigned throughout the air; but upon an eminence he beheld a human figure, which seemed to be in motion. Rinaldo stopped his horse, and observing the figure, perceived that it approached him. "Who's there?" said Rinaldo.—"One who knew you," replied a voice from the eminence, "when you were Count Mandochini. I know another name for you, however, which I would not entrust even to the silence of night."—"If you know me," said Rinaldo, "tell me your name."—"Do you not know my voice? I am your servant, Ludovico."

Rin.—Ludovico! Yes; now I know you. How came you here?"

Lud.—Why not here as well as elsewhere? I had almost done for the captain in Calabria; but he that is born to be hanged will never be drowned, and the rascal got well of his wounds. I took ship in Calabria as a travelling gunsmith, and came to Messina, where I saw you twice, but in such great company that I could not speak to you. What name you went by I did not know, and could not ask you. My money, however, began to fail, and I knew not what to do; but as I was walking, much dejected, on the port, I again beheld that accursed captain. I should as soon have expected to see the devil. Thunder and lightning, thought I, is the rascal yet alive? Could I but find my captain! So I kept lurking about, but could not find you anywhere; at length I saw you going to the villa—followed you, got acquainted with the servants, pretended to be a travelling fencing-master, learnt on whose premises I was, reflected a little, and observing that an entertainment was to be given at the villa, I thought it would furnish me with an opportunity of speaking to my captain. Thus I slipped into the garden, and stationed myself in a grove, where I soon perceived that villain

the Corsican. I listened to what passed, heard every word, saw you draw, and instantly I laid the rascal upon the ground; yes, I have done for him I hope; if he is not dead by this time, 'tis not my fault. When I quitted the garden I concealed myself behind an aloe, and after awhile saw a horse brought there ready saddled. The thought immediately struck me that it was for my captain, and so it turned out. I saw you mount, followed you, and here I am, ready to attend you wherever you go, if you will permit me; if not, give me a couple of ducats and send me to the devil.

Rin.—Come with me, my brave fellow, and in the next village you shall be mounted.

Lud.—Many thanks. Oh that it were daylight! I am as hungry as a wolf. But now there are two of us, we shall travel better. I have a couple of pocket pistols, and before the enemy kill you, they must dispatch me.

Thus Ludovico accompanied his captain, and at break of day they entered a village, where they stopped, and, having breakfasted, Rinaldo bought a mule for Ludovico, and again set off.

On the sixth day they arrived, without further adventure or peril, in the land of adventures and perils, and the place of their destination.

The castle stood on the mountain, under an eminence surrounded by walls and fosses, provided with drawbridges, and strongly fortified. The warder was an old man, somewhat petulant, but of a good heart, and formerly steward to the countess's father. When he had read the letter, he said drily, "According to the directions of the countess, the whole castle is at your command."

Ludovico now led the beasts to the stable, and Rinaldo took possession of a couple of neat rooms, in which was some very antique furniture.

The family consisted of the warder, his wife, his daughter, a maid-servant, and an old invalid, who had formerly served under the countess's father in Spain, and who here subsisted as a pensioner of the countess.

As to the provisions the castle afforded, appearances were but very moderate, and Rinaldo began to make preparations for some addition in this respect. Ludovico, Giorgio the invalid, and the maid were sent out, and soon brought an ass, loaded with provisions, which stocked the kitchen and store-room. The court-yard was also filled with fowl, and the wine cellar with wine, of which the warder delivered the keys to Rinaldo.

Thus in a short time the castle became more gay and lively, and the once dull and stupid inhabitants now grew active, cheerful, and happy.

Rinaldo amused himself sometimes with sitting on the old fortifications and viewing the surrounding country, sometimes with walking over the mountains, sometimes with reading a couple of old chronicles, and sometimes with hearing the warder relate the adventures of the place, and Giorgio give an account of his campaigns.

Once they were sitting together, and had lost themselves amid adventures and marvellous stories, when the warder exclaimed, "Ah, my dear baron! there are many such stories current of this neighbourhood, and not only of the neighbourhood, but also of our castle itself."

Rin.—Of the castle where we are now?

Warder.—Of this very castle.

Giorgio.—Yes, yes, of this very castle.

Rin.—Indeed! but what, for instance? spectres?

Gior.—Yes, and the like.

War.—The great hall, where the large padlocks hang on the door, is haunted.

Gior.—Yes, that is the place.

Lud.—What, for rats and mice?

Gior.—Hush! hush! 'tis no trifle, I assure you. Quite other things than rats and mice.

Lud.—Have you seen anything?

Gior.—Not I; I have heard enough. But there is Lisberta, the warder's daughter, who has seen a great deal.

Rin.—Lisberta!

Lisberta.—Yes, I myself.

Rin.—What did you see?

Lis.—Last year the countess intended to come here, but did not come. However we cleaned the castle, and prepared for her reception. I was to sweep out the great hall, from

which a staircase that is shut up goes I know not whither, and the lower door is constantly fastened from within, but how, my father knows not.

War.—Yes, constantly. Since I have been here, however, no one has taken the trouble to look farther into it; for no one comes near us—except that the countess once stayed here for three days.

Rin.—Well, Lisberta.

Lis.—Well, and so when I had swept the hall, and was standing quite still, cleaning the lustres in the window, I heard footsteps, and thinking it was my father, or some one of the family, I took no particular notice. But as it came nearer, I turned round, and saw in the door, going up stairs, a great, long, hagged figure, with a beard. I know nothing more, for I sank senseless upon the floor, and when I recovered myself, it had disappeared. But it is certainly true, and I can take my sacrament oath of it.

Rin.—By heavens, 'tis wonderful!

Gior.—Is it not strange?

Rin.—As we have plenty of time on our hands, we will examine the place to-morrow.

War.—Well, don't take me with you, for I shall be of no service.

Rin.—Ludovico and I will do it, and Giorgio will no doubt be willing to accompany us, for he is an old soldier.

Gior.—With all my heart. I will soon finish the campaign.

Lis.—Oh sir, do not attempt to look into it; it can never be found out how it is.

Rin.—Be not uneasy; I know a little of exorcism.

Lis.—If you are but sure of what you are about, and that it will not turn out as with brother Boniface the Capuchin, who thought he understood exorcism too, but the ghost thrashed him within an inch of his life.

Lud.—It must have been a vigorous ghost.

Lis.—Yes, certainly; the good friar has been bed-ridden these four years, but he is still alive, and you may ask him about it.

Lud.—Well, we are not afraid of being thrashed; we have fists too, and can hit as hard blows as a ghost.

Lis.—Heaven grant it may come to that.

Rin.—You will attend me, however, if I come back with a good beating?

Lis.—Oh, yes, with all my heart; but you and Ludovico may perhaps catch a pistol-ball; and how will Giorgio look when his bones are all broken?

Gior.—Don't be so wondrous wise, miss; my bones are as good as ever. Were it not for the wound I received in my hip at Barcelona, I would run a race with you; yes, I have a constitution as hard as iron; but the wound at Barcelona, and that in my right shoulder at Bellegarde—of that I was badly cured—and when the weather changes, I feel it most cursedly. But as to the ghost-hunting expedition, I am your man. I will take my sabre.

Lis.—Of what use can it be? I will give you a church candle, and that will do much better. I got it at the last pilgrimage.

After this conversation, Rinaldo undertook to perform the search, which he did on the following day, when the great padlocks on the hall-door were unlocked, the bolts drawn, and the door opened, upon which a couple of rats flew at the warder's head, who instantly fell down in a swoon. The rats were killed, and the windows opened, but the warder left the party to themselves. Lisberta lighted three candles, and recommended the adventurers to the Holy Virgin, St Anthony, and St Marciana, and went away, assuring them at the same time she would pray most devoutly for them all.

The hall was a large square apartment, hung with old tapestry and a couple of family pictures, but contained no other furniture.

They opened the door leading to the stairs, and descended thirty-six steps, till they came to a door, which, as has been said, was fastened from within. This door appeared very old and rotten, and was easily broken with an iron crow, but the bolts from within did not move. The vaulted roof gave back the sound, and our adventurers, creeping through the fracture, entered an arched way, somewhat higher than a man, and about half as broad.

They had proceeded about twenty paces, when they came to some steps, which they descended, and a little further found more steps, beyond which the road was somewhat

shelving downwards, and led to an arched circular room, the door out of which was likewise bolted from without.

"This," said Rinaldo, is a subterraneous passage, intended for an escape in time of war; but what surprises me is, that all the doors are bolted from without."

They were about to break the door open, when they clearly and distinctly heard a cry of "Woe! woe! woe!" at which Giorgio was so alarmed, that he trembled all over, and his teeth chattered. Rinaldo therefore ordered Ludovico to take the coward back to daylight, where, on their arrival in the great hall, Giorgio was seized with convulsions. Ludovico therefore alarmed the castle, and Giorgio was carried to bed, where Ludovico bled him. The warder's wife also administered some stomachic drops to her patient, who seemed in the agonies of death.

The warder, who had not yet recovered from the fright he had himself experienced, crawled to him, and began sometimes to curse and sometimes to pray, while Lisberta and her mother, with trembling voice, sang an hymn, and Ludovico emptied half a bottle of wine.

Meanwhile Rinaldo did not stay long at the door where he heard the cry, but knocking at it, called out, "Who is there? Open the door, or I will force it."

A voice replied, by asking, "Who thus disturbs the inhabitants of the bowels of the earth?"

"One who would be acquainted with them," said Rinaldo.

"We desire not to see him," replied the voice.

Rinaldo repeated his threat: "Open, or we will force the door."

"If you can bear," said the voice, "to behold that which is buried beneath the earth, procure the keys of this door from the Count of Martagno."

"The Count of Martagno," said Rinaldo, "can give me no keys. He is no more."

"Is he dead?" asked the voice, hastily.

"He died two years ago," replied Rinaldo.

Here followed a pause, which continued till Rinaldo applied the crow, and forced the door.

He now entered a dark vault, whence a tall figure suddenly glided away; Rinaldo hastened after it, but it shut an iron door behind it with a loud noise. Rinaldo threw himself upon a bench; his candle went out, and he heard from a corner of the room a female voice saying, with a melancholy tone, "Just heaven, terminate my days!"

This deeply affected Rinaldo, who started up, and asked, with trembling voice, "Who speaks?"

"If I may call you my deliverer," replied the voice, "know that the most wretched of human beings implores your pity. Ah! even were you the cruel Count Martagno himself, could you behold my misery, you would release me from this dungeon, and restore me to the light of day, of which I have so long been deprived."

Count Martagno is dead."

"Dead! God be praised! Then are my sorrows past."

'And I will save you."

Rinaldo heard footsteps, and some one calling him by name from a distance. He answered, and found it was Ludovico, who came very opportunely with a lighted candle. Rinaldo searched for his candle, lighted it, ordered Ludovico to be silent, and asked, "Thou that just now conversed with me, where art thou?"

"Here," said the voice, from a round hole in the wall, about four feet from the ground; "here am I, immersed in a narrow dungeon, and have no opening but this hole, through which I receive my miserable sustenance."

Rinaldo held the light, and saw a pale haggard countenance, with hollow eyes, before the opening. This sight pierced him to the heart, and almost paralysed Ludovico himself.

"Ah!" exclaimed the prisoner, with a deep sigh, and hurried back, "these eyes could never bear the sight of daylight."

Rinaldo now reflected for a moment, and, to secure himself a retreat, examined the iron door which the figure had shut behind her, and sent Ludovico back for some tools and large padlocks; for he found a number of bars and fastenings hanging beside the door. Meanwhile he strictly enjoined Ludovico to keep silence relative to what he had seen.

When Ludovico was gone, Rinaldo asked the prisoner, "Have you seen no light here?"

Prisoner.—Sometimes a dim-burning lamp, when my straw or my bread and water were brought me, but no other light.

Rin.—Then accustom your eyes from time to time to this candle, and by degrees you will be enabled to bear the daylight.

Pris.—Will you release me?

Rin.—I will.

Pris.—Almighty God! I thank thee. Oh, reward my deliverer for his benevolence.

Rinaldo leaned against the wall, and sighing, exclaimed, "Oh God! teach me to pray devoutly, as once I prayed in the days of my youthful innocence!"

When Ludovico returned, he brought not only the padlocks and tools, but a bottle of wine, some fruit, and some pastry, "for the unhappy, unknown, and pale-faced stranger," as he expressed himself.

"You have done extremely well, Ludovico," said Rinaldo, and gave the prisoner what was brought for her. She received it with the warmest gratitude, and while she was eating, her deliverer barred the iron door, and padlocked it; he then set to work with a pickaxe and crow, and widened the hole so that the prisoner might pass, who had no sooner quitted her dungeon, than she fell on her knees and prayed.

Heavens! what a sight! Haggard, pale, and meagre, almost reduced to a skeleton, with scarcely clothes to cover her, she tottered forth, leaning on Rinaldo, along the subterraneous passage, and as soon as she reached the hall, covered her face with her hands. Unaccustomed to the air, she sank upon the earth. Rinaldo led her to a room, where he laid her upon a bed. She fell into a deep sleep, and Rinaldo locked the door.

When it was day, he sent Ludovico to the nearest town to buy some women's clothes; and, meanwhile, with the assistance of the warder, fixed another door to the stairs, which having fastened up, he took him to the chamber where the liberated prisoner lay, held his hand to his mouth, led him out again, and locked the dooor.

War.—Heavens! what have I seen?

Rin.—The secrets of the bowels of the earth. You are a man of understanding, warder. What you have seen you must conceal until I find a proper opportunity to publish the whole. This, perhaps, concerns the honour of the countess and her family.

War.—Baron, I am a man, and can keep silence.

Rin.—If you do not, I will set something at you far worse than the rats.

War.—Silence about the rats. I am quite ashamed of that story. However, I am a little consoled by seeing that Giorgio is not so great a hero as he pretends.

Rin.—How is he?

War.—Better; he says he heard and saw dreadful things.

Rin.—The fool! he saw nothing. 'Twas but an owl that screamed, and he fell down in a swoon.

War.—An owl! oh, heavens, what a coward!

Rin.—Hush, hush! remember the rats.

War.—Well, well, we are neither of us any great matters in point of courage. But—what was I going to ask——Oh, who is this skeleton of a woman?

Rin.—Silence. Not a word on that subject. We will talk of it to-morrow.

Ludovico now brought clothes, which were given to the stranger, who was also supplied with food, and shut up in a chamber, where she slept a day and a half almost without intermission, which very much contributed to her recovery.

Giorgio and the warder were much rallied by Ludovico for their cowardice, and the latter was besides tormented with curiosity on account of the secret, of which he knew nothing more than came out by Ludovico's raillery.

Meanwhile Rinaldo and Ludovico went in search of further discoveries in the subterraneous passages. They had loosened the padlocks and bars from the iron door, and after endeavouring in vain to open it, were resting a short time from their labours, when they heard footsteps from without. Presently the bolt was drawn back, the door creaked upon its hinges, and a figure came half in sight, when Rinaldo sprang up and thundered out, "Halt!"

The figure instantly disappeared, knowing the ground better than Rinaldo and Ludovico, who pursued it. They now stumbled through a small arched way till they came to a flight of

stone steps leading upwards, and ending at an iron trap-door. They ascended them, and entered a tower with a winding staircase. Having also ascended these, they came out on the battlements of the tower, and perceived that it stood entirely alone, on the farthest peak of the mountain where the castle was situated. The tower had no entrance, and they could not comprehend whither the figure had gone, unless a rope-ladder had been prepared for his escape.

As they could now make no further discoveries, they turned back, examined the trap-door, found it very thick and strong, and well furnished with bolts from within, which they bolted and padlocked strongly. In like manner they locked the iron door from within, and returned through the hall into the castle.

Meanwhile the lady, having rested two days, had considerably recovered; and Rinaldo, who was anxious to know whom he had thus rescued from her subterraneous dungeon, now began to make inquiries of her, to which she replied as follows:—

"I feel it my duty," said she, "to give my deliverer a true account of my misfortunes, and this I will perform to the utmost of my power. My name is Violanta, daughter of one Brotezza di Noli, formerly a vassal of Count Martagno, who had recently lost his first wife, when I had the misfortune to become acquainted with him. He declared he loved me, but I believed him not. He swore, however, his views were honourable, and solicited my hand in marriage. I referred him to my father, for I had lost my mother in my infancy. My father was then fighting in Spain under the banners of his lord, and fell at the siege of Barcelona. Poor and destitute, I sought refuge with an old woman, who assisted me in making up a dower with which I might be received into a convent. Having at length succeeded in this, I set off to put my plan into execution, but was surprised on the road, bound, and carried off, I know not whither. 'Twas into the hands of Count Martagno's people that I fell, and they brought me to this castle, where the count again repeated his profession of love. I rejected every dishonourable proposal with firmness and disdain, and declared I would rather die than resign my virtue. The count endeavoured to obtain what I refused by art and force, but all was in vain. To misuse me was in his power, but not to make me yield to his wicked passion; and I told him nothing but marriage should ever procure him what he asked. Thus finding it impossible to undermine my virtue, he resolved to obtain me by that means, and the priest united us in the bonds of wedlock."

"What!" interrupted Rinaldo, "were you then married to Count Martagno?"

"I was," continued Violanta, "to my misfortune. He lived here with me somewhat more than a quarter of a year, and then set off on a journey, from which he never returned, but (God knows why!) had me conveyed to yonder prison where you found me. To my complaints I received no answer, and the world heard not of my sorrows. An old knave gave me bread and water, and daily grumbled, saying, "Will you live for ever?"

"Just heaven!" exclaimed Rinaldo, "while you lay in a dungeon, the count was again married at Messina. His widow is still living, and certainly has not the slightest suspicion of this villanous transaction."

Their conversation was now interrupted by a noise in the castle, and Rinaldo, springing up and going to the window, saw a carriage drive up, in which was the countess.

Rinaldo hastened to meet her, and when they were alone, she told him the Marquis Romano had received the captain into his house, and hopes were entertained of his recovery. "As to you, chevalier," continued she, "'tis believed you have embarked and left Sicily. Meanwhile I have taken the opportunity of the nobility leaving Messina, and going to their estates, to come and see you."

Rinaldo thanked her warmly for her kindness, and for her care of his safety; and waited a proper time for declaring the discoveries he had made, and the story of Violanta.

The countess was extremely shocked at the tale, and desired to see Violanta, from whose mouth she again heard her story, promised her protection and assistance, and told her she would consider her as a sister.

The castle now became more lively, and the inquisitive warder, after certain hints and partial explanations, made no further inquiries. Violanta passed for a companion of the countess, and no one knew how she had come to the castle.

One fine summer evening as Rinaldo and the countess were sitting in a balcony of the

castle, hand in hand, both party lost in thought; and without much conversation, the countess at length said :—

Countess.—Sooner or later, my dear friend, we must come to an explanation. Why should we postpone it, and cause ourselves so many melancholy and tedious hours? Let it then be now: tell me sincerely what are your future plans?

Rin.—To do that which I must do; to leave Sicily.

Countess.—Alone?

Rin.—Who should accompany me except my Ludovico?

Countess.—And no one else?

Rin.—No one. He will never desert me.

Countess.—No one else? Chevalier, will you really travel alone?

Rin.—Ah, countess, it must be so.

Countess.—It must be so? Have you then connections elsewhere that——

Rin.—Unfortunate connections.

Countess.—Have you a wife?

Rin.—No, neither wife nor child; neither father nor mother; nor a country that owns me.

Countess.—Have you then been banished and proscribed?

Rin.—Everywhere,

Countess.—Everywhere? How is that possible? Explain yourself. Are you not the cavalier Della Cintra?

Rin.—I am not.

Countess.—What, then, is your name?

Rin.—That you must permit me to conceal. When I am gone, you shall know whom you have honoured with your friendship and your love.

Countess.—You make me melancholy. The Marquis Romano gave it out that he knew you.

Rin.—Trust not the marquis or his friends; they would have done me a dreadful injury. Now I see through it all. I have escaped this time; but who knows——

Countess.—Mysterious man! speak out.

Rin.—I dare not.

Countess.—How? I have given you my heart, given myself up to you, given you all that was dear to me, and you can keep secrets from me?—from me? I will declare still more to you than you already know. I am ready to go with you, wherever you would go yourself

Rin.—'Tis impossible! You cannot go with me.

Countess.—I offer you my hand.

Rin.—Unfortunate woman! your hand belongs to some more honourable man.

Countess.—It belongs to the father of my child, which I——

Rin.—Almighty God! what sayest thou? Then be a mother, and give your own name to your child; mine he cannot bear with honour.

Countess.—Great heavens! who art thou?

Rin.—I am—oh, heavens! I must not tell you.

Countess.—Be you who you may, I must know.

Rin.—When you lay in my arms, you were in the arms of the abomination of all Italy.

Countess.—Oh, heavens!

Rin.—I am—I am Rinaldini.

Countess.—Jesus Maria!

The countess fell from her seat, and swooned. Rinaldo carried her into her chamber. Early the next day he asked to speak with her, but she was still asleep. Soon after a note from her was brought to him, sealed up, to the following effect :—

"Unfortunate man! you have rendered me inexpressibly miserable. I cannot see you more; leave me to my fate, and pursue yours."

Rinaldo ordered his horse and mule to be saddled, and, setting off with Ludovico, took leave of the castle.

They conversed very little on the road, and travelled two days without entering into any

connected discourse. Ludovico, indeed, endeavoured to turn the attention of Rinaldo to various subjects; but Rinaldo was wholly averse to talk of them, and continued pensive and silent.

On the third day, they set off from a miserable little inn at daybreak, in order before night to get beyond a pass over a chain of mountains which had been described to them as extremely dangerous; and here Rinaldo himself experienced that anxiety so often felt by travellers when exposed to the attacks of such robbers as he had once commanded.

They reached the pass by noon, and had scarcely advanced a hundred paces before they heard a distant noise and outcry, together with the report of fire-arms.

"Come on," said Rinaldo to Ludovico, "here is danger. Let us hasten thither. Perhaps we shall be obliged to become enemies of some of our old companions."

"Well," said Ludovico, "with all my heart; I will fight my man."

Thus saying, they set forward, and soon discovered a carriage stopped by six or eight robbers, who were taking off the mules.

"Halt!" cried Rinaldo, while yet at some distance, and at the same time drew out his pistol.

Immediately a shot fell near him, but missed.

Ludovico stood up in his stirrups, and fired his musket. One of the robbers fell, and a second fired at Rinaldo: but the latter rushing among them with his sabre, the rest fled to the woods.

"These cannot be any of our comrades," said Ludovico.

Rinaldo now advanced to the carriage, while Ludovico helped the coachman, who lay wounded by some of his party, who were killed, to get upon his legs, and, looking in, perceived the Baron Denongo and his daughter, the beautiful Laura.

"Chevalier!" exclaimed she, the instant she saw him; and the baron said, "Sir, I am under the greatest of obligations to you. Were it not for your courageous assistance, we had been robbed, and perhaps maltreated in the most dreadful manner."

"No compliments!" replied Rinaldo; "a man of honour like you would, doubtless, in the like case, have equally served me. I will, however, do more: I and my servant will escort you; for I perceive some of your attendants are killed, and others wounded."

"Chevalier," replied the baron, "your generosity has anticipated a request I was about to make. I have about six leagues to go to my castle, and, as you have observed, have lost some of my attendants. An old man like myself is glad to avail himself of the protection of a young man of honour like you; and I may venture to say I have in some measure deserved this kindness, since in my youth I rendered others such services as you are now conferring on me."

While these and a few more compliments were passing between the baron and Rinaldo, during which Laura continued silent, Ludovico bound up the coachman's wounds as well as he was able, and helped him on to the coach-box; he also put the mules to the carriage; and everything being in readiness, they set off, Rinaldo riding by the side of the carriage.

In five hours they arrived at the baron's castle, where the baron thus addressed him:—"Chevalier," said he, "it is now my turn not only to show you my politeness, but, as you have saved my life, to request the favour of your taking up your abode at my house."

To this Rinaldo scarcely knew what to reply, when Laura added—"You must not refuse us, chevalier."

Upon this he sprang off his horse, and accepted the invitation, which was also very grateful to Ludovico.

"Chevalier," said Ludovico, "we have again fallen into kind and tender hands: here we shall be well."

"We shall not stay long," replied Rinaldo.

"Aha!" returned Ludovico; "had I money, I would bet we shall not go very soon."

Rin.—Then you would lose.

Lud.—Lose what? Not my money; I know you better. Such a pair of black eyes will not soon suffer you to depart; however, I cannot blame you; in your place I should do the same.

Rin.—This time, however, you are deceived.

Lud.—You will deceive yourself first.

Rin.—Not unless I am first deceived.

Lud.—That, too, may come to pass; nor will I contradict you, provided it be by a woman.

Rin.—Indeed! then you think——

Lud.—That I would not trust one of them, let them appear as honourable as they may.

Rin.—Where did you learn this philosophy?

Lud.—In the world, where I have lived, and moved, and heard, and seen a great deal.

Rin.—Unload our baggage, and take it to the chamber appointed for my reception.

Lud.—Well, all is for the best. But now you must go to the old man—and to his daughter.

The old man was a worthy, hearty old man, much advanced in years; and though tormented with many bodily pains, by no means morose; he was liberal, chatty, and good-natured. Ludovico's courage he easily found means to reward by giving him a purse of ducats; but as to his guest, whom he only knew as Chevalier Della Cintra, he could not discover any mode of requiting his services without wounding his delicacy; he consulted, therefore, with his daughter, but she was equally unable to point out a way of discharging this important obligation.

Rinaldo did not live so free from care with the baron as in the castle of the countess. Many reflections on his present situation and future prospects intruded on his mind, and others suggested many motives for shortening his stay. Having given Laura a hint of this, she replied, "At Messina we all imagined you had left the island after that bloody affray; but I now perceive you were in no hurry to quit it. Why, then, should your visit to my father seem so tedious and unpleasing?"

Rin.—That would be impossible.

Laura.—Perhaps a desire to be elsewhere—in company with some one who interests you more than—my father.

Rin. (*smiling.*)—What a good old man!

Laura (*carelessly*).—That he certainly is. His greatest concern is that he knows not how to compensate the man who has saved his life. As for me——

Rin.—You would know better.

Laura.—I would give you something; but more I cannot do.

Rin.—And this present——

Laura.—I have not yet determined what. You must give me time to think of it. But if the loadstone that drew you hither——

Rin.—Do you call my unhappy fate a loadstone?

Laura.—Your unhappy fate! I knew nothing of it.

Rin.—'Tis better it should be known to me alone. It drives me hence, and would expel me from Paradise itself.

Laura.—Have you quarrelled with the Countess Martagno?

Rin.—Why do you talk of the countess?

Laura.—Do not pretend ignorance; I know what I say. Perhaps you have lost your way. The countess has several estates and castles, and is now in the country.

Here they were interrupted by the baron, who entered the room with a letter in his hand, saying, "Here is a singular piece of intelligence from Messina. 'Tis there positively asserted that the celebrated Rinaldini is not dead, but is actually in the island. Perhaps the robbers, from whom this brave knight has rescued us, were some of his people. It would be very unfortunate should this unwelcome guest take up his quarters in our valley. I will arm all my people, for he sometimes attacks castles, and even fortified places."

"I cannot imagine," said Rinaldo, "that Rinaldini can be in Sicily. Were it so, we should certainly have heard something of him, for he cannot remain long inactive."

"Certainly," replied the baron, "for he lives by exciting a constant agitation and alarm."

Rin.—Surely; by and in constant agitation and alarm.

Baron.—Even in Messina the greatest fear prevails. 'Tis said the viceroy will order out the militia, and set a price on the head of this king of robbers.

Rin.—I cannot reckon much upon the price; for when I fell into his hands, he behaved

very honourably to me, and made me promise not to use any artifice or stratagem against him; and in open field I would by no means contend with him.

Baron.—In fact, I am alarmed for the purses of our nobility, and for my own. I myself am old and feeble, and what are only twelve men, whom I have in the castle, against such a desperado? Chevalier, you must do me the favour to stay some time longer with us. You are a man of courage and resolution, and your Ludovico is a fine desperate fellow too. Yes, indeed, were he not in your service, I could almost imagine him one of Rinaldini's band.

Rin.—He seems bold enough; but I don't think we have anything to fear from him.

Meanwhile, the baron's steward now returned from the neighbouring town, where he had been to transact some business, and having given an account of his various commissions, he added, that several travellers had been attacked and plundered by robbers on the roads in the vicinity.

"Ay, that is what I feared," said the baron; "the storm comes nearer and nearer."

The steward now quitted the room, and the baron continued to expatiate upon his cares and fears. Rinaldo endeavoured in vain to banish them; and Laura, who feared Rinaldo would still persist in his intentions of leaving them, said, "The chief duty of a knight is to protect and defend the ladies; I therefore request of you, chevalier, not to forget yours, and to stay here to protect me."

Rin.—You know, however, that the protection of a knight is not wholly disinterested.

Baron.—Right, my good chevalier; you will remind her of that, for otherwise she might desire it gratis.

Laura.—I know not how such a service can be repaid.

Rin.—The reward depends on your own will; but paid it must be.

Laura.—Then let my father pay for me.

Baron.—That cannot be. Besides, I am a debtor also, and must pay for myself.

Laura.—Well, then I will pay you like some heroine of romance. Take this riband—these are my colours—wear it, and let it inflame you to mighty deeds, and teach you to become worthy of the present. Behave like a man and a true knight, and then you shall also gain what I wear near this riband——

Baron.—How? That must be your heart.

Laura.—No, my dear father, I mean my portrait.

Here the conversation ended, and Rinaldo began to struggle with himself, thus reflecting on his views and plans:—"To what end should I continue longer in this castle; what advantage can it bring? It will but form a net, in which I shall soon be caught. Why should I delude myself with false hopes? Laura's hand I can never obtain; and even had I unfairly stolen her as a knight, should I not again be torn from her as a captain of banditti?"

With these reflections, he threw himself down beneath a clump of trees on the bank of a river that meandered through flowery meadows along the plains that bounded the mountains. Here he endeavoured to form some resolution, which, however, he was unable to do, and soothed by the balmy fragrance of the air, he sank into a deep sleep.

When he awoke he perceived, a few steps from him, sitting on a stone, beneath a lofty pine, a man in singular clothing, reading a book; his blooming, florid countenance seemed at variance with his white head and beard, which marked him for an old man. His long and ample robe was like that of the Pythagoreans, of sky blue, and girded high up with a belt of fiery red. His arms were covered with the white sleeves of an under garment, and his feet had no clothing but the thongs of red leather with which his broad sandals were bound.

This singular man strongly attracted Rinaldo's attention; he contemplated him for a time in silence, but at length he arose, approached and accosted him; upon which the cheerful old man, first fixing his eyes on him, said, "How canst thou be so imprudent to sleep so carelessly in this place, where venomous creatures abound?"—"Is there really any danger?" said Rinaldo.—"Look behind you," replied the old man with the most perfect tranquillity.

Rinaldo looked, and perceived a dead serpent in the grass, not far from the spot where he had slept. He started, and cast an inquisitive look towards the old man, who, understanding his meaning, said, "That snake approached you as you slept."

Rin.—And is now dead!

Old Man.—As you see.

Rin.—To what good fortune do I owe my safety?

Old Man.—I passed near you as the serpent was darting towards you, and—it is dead.

Rin.—You killed it? But with what weapons? I perceive you have none.

Old Man.—There are words which have twice the force of any weapons.

Rin.—Words!

Old Man.—Yes, words. I seated myself opposite you, that as long as you slept no similar misfortune might attend you.

Rin.—Accept my best thanks, and permit me to store your name in my grateful memory.

Old Man.—Names render men neither better nor more remarkable than they really are. Remember my figure, and I shall live in your memory without a name.

Rin.—You speak the most modern dialect of the island, and your dress is that of antiquity. How can this be reconciled?

Old Man.—In the simplest manner possible.

Rin.—Once more, who are you?

Old Man.—That which you may also be if you will, a friend to wisdom.

Rin.—Is wisdom, then, a universal friend?

Old Man.—As universal as the sun, and like him its rays warm every heart that is adapted to receive them. But to feel this celestial warmth requires an organization which all men do not possess—a bad man is not worthy to know the road to the temple of wisdom; and that which to the good would be a blessing, to the bad would prove a curse. To him that has no smell, the fragrance of these flowery vales is vain; and as each element requires a peculiar organization in the creatures that inhabit it, so does the temple of wisdom require a certain organization in him that would enter its sanctuary.

Rin.—Here great secrets are unfolded.

Old Man.—The temple of wisdom is the temple of nature, and in nature nothing is secret. What men call the secrets of nature are but the laws which are clearly written in the book of nature, and that is open to every man. Read in that book—read with the eyes of the soul, whose eye is observation. This eye, however, must be clear, and this clearness is the child of peace and of the absence of the passions. 'Tis but the pure fountain that shows the just reflections of the all-animating sun. Troubled streams are no mirrors. Just so it is with wisdom. Nature resembles a beautiful woman, who sometimes carelessly exposes her secret charms, and conceals the rest with the utmost care. He who can think, feel, prove, and observe, is worthy to behold her without a veil. Nature but speaks to those who have organs fine enough to hear her voice. The refinement of the senses is an approach to the secrets of nature. The man who approaches her with a pure heart and clear eyes, she calls her high priest, and welcomes to her sanctuary. There the veil falls from his eyes, and all that was before incomprehensible becomes clear and plain; for all that is incomprehensible in this sublunary world lies in assimilation, and this is what the least of mankind may understand. The loadstone only acts on its like, and its effluvia are wonderful. This power is but a trifle; there are secret powers—powers of the soul; and their mode of action is still more wonderful than that of the loadstone.

Rin.—And this power lies in the soul of every man?

Old Man.—Of every man. But it must be awakened and brought into action. In the best of mankind it awakens of itself.

Rin.—This depends on the sphere of action men adopt.

Old Man.—A very just observation, my son; every man has a certain relation to the whole.

Rin.—Many things lie beyond his sphere.

Old Man.—He endeavours to collect them together within it.

Rin.—The time and circumstance of man's existence are so limited, that men often only begin to know themselves when they are ceasing to live.

Old Man.—The life of man is like the course of the sun. His entrance into life is as the morning. His noon is his chief period of activity; his evening is death. Thus the sun leaves the horizon; his light is lost in twilight, yet his rays still illuminate many a cottage, and are beheld by the inhabitants of the mountains. Many things there are which do not appear, but yet not the less exist. The weak eye of man, strengthened and assisted by glasses, discovers

things unknown before. Thus your soul's eye, when you have learnt how to strengthen and assist it, may make discoveries you do not now suspect.

Here the old man put his book into his bosom and arose. Rinaldo beheld him with doubtful eye, till after a short pause, he said—

Old Man.—Farewell, my son! Let not your powers sleep in your mind's eye! Awaken them! It requires but a breath to fan the spark into a flame. Farewell!

Rin.—Whither are you going?

Old Man.—Whence I came. To the mountain-valley where I dwell.

Rin.—May I visit you there?

Old Man.—I invite you to come.

Rin.—Where shall I find your habitation?

Old Man.—Pursue the river's course. Yonder in the mountain are my scholars, constantly employed in the study of Nature's works; they will show you my dwelling. Meanwhile open the head of that serpent, and you will find in his brain a small green stone—take it, and it will defend you against poison.

The old man now left him, and Rinaldo beheld him till the mountain concealed him from his view. He then sought for the stone in the serpent's brain; and having found it, went back in pensive mood to the castle.

Here it was remarked that Rinaldo appeared more thoughtful than usual; and Laura invited him to pass a few moments in her chamber after supper, which he did as soon as the baron had retired. He found her alone, and she appeared confused, which, however, Rinaldo avoided noticing.

Laura.—Chevalier, you have these two days grown quite thoughtful and absent, and still more to-day than before. If I knew the cause of your inquietude, perhaps I might alleviate it. I trust myself alone with you, because I have something important to disclose. But I rely upon your honour to pardon the declaration I am about to make, should it wound your heart. You will forgive this expression; for though I may be deceived, your behaviour for some days past perhaps needlessly alarms me for your pretensions.

Rin.—I understand you.

Laura.—Indeed!

Rin.—Fear not.

Laura.—How?

Rin.—Declare yourself.

Laura now fixed her eyes upon Rinaldo; a pause followed, and she first broke silence.

Laura.—I will declare myself.

Rin.—If you think me worthy of your confidence, do so.

Laura.—I will; I must hazard it.

Rin.—You hazard nothing.

Laura.—That we shall see. Know then I love——

Rin.—Indeed!

Laura.—Indeed.

Rin.—Is that your secret?

Laura.—It is.

Rin.—And why did you not conceal it?

Laura.—I would find a confident who will receive it, and guard it as his own.

Rin.—It is so guarded.

Laura.—Hear me further. My father has an intention of marrying me. This I know; to whom, I know not. But be it to whom it may, I am certain I cannot love him.

Rin.—Of that you cannot be certain.

Laura.—I know it but too surely; for, to him I love, I am certain he will not give me.

Rin.—That is the question.

Laura.—No question, but certainty. The man I love is beneath my rank. He is not noble.

Rin.—If you think him noble, and if he deserves the love of a noble heart, he is doubly ennobled. May I know his name?

Laura.—Oh, yes; to you I am not afraid to name him. He is my father's secretary.

Rin.—As far as I know him, a very worthy man. I cannot disapprove your passion.

Laura.—Indeed! Not disapprove it? Not even though——

Rin.—I understand you; though I myself were the man for whom you were destined by your father.

A door now opened, and the secretary entered; then seizing Rinaldo's hand, he pressed it to his bosom, and was about to speak, when the latter led him up to Laura, placed him in her arms, and left the room.

Rinaldo slept but little, and left the castle at daybreak, to visit the dwelling of the old man with whom he had lately become acquainted. He followed the course of the river, entered the small valley between the hills, and came to a plain surrounded by steep rocks. Before him was an olive grove, through which a pathway led directly to three marble statues, adorned with hieroglyphics, and behind them stood an altar, with a beautiful basso relievo, under which was this inscription:—

ΛΙΚΑ ΣΑΡΑΒΤΑΛΑΜ.

Rinaldo was deeply engaged in contemplating these figures, when he descried a tall, thin, old man coming towards him, with an olive branch in his hair, and a hermit's serpentine staff in his hand. This man saluted Rinaldo, saying, "Welcome, honourable stranger, who yesterday spoke with our great and beloved master."

Rinaldo made him a bow of thanks, and he proceeded thus:—

"You contemplate these figures, and the inscriptions they bear, with so much apparent curiosity, that I can read your wishes in your eyes. As to the words Λικα Σαραβταλαμ, they signify the Creator of the world, and the same as the Peruvians call Viracocha. He is represented by the figure you there see, of an old man, symbolical of the eternal, all-creative unity. The three flames that surround his head are the symbolic number of perfection. His extended hands, in which are placed the sun and the earth, are the symbols of the first number that arises out of unity, the number of creation and the type of production. The sun and the world are links of a chain. The body of the column is the symbol of harmony, and is sculptured with the heavenly lyre. It rests on seven books, which are the seven books of the secrets of nature, and are sealed with seven seals. The four chords of the instrument are the symbol of the tetrachordon, union of the harmony in the number four. This also is the symbol of the fitness of things, as arising also of the mathematical point, line, superfices, and depth. These hieroglyphics express the whole of nature, namely, existence, organization, plurality, and motion."

Rinaldo beheld his informant with surprise, and was about to inquire after the old man, when he himself appeared in the same dress in which he had seen him the preceding day, and, saluting him in a friendly manner, waved his hand, saying, "Well, my son, you have kept your word." He then conducted him through flowery fields, and said, "This is the valley I inhabit. It still retains its most ancient name, and thence I am called in the neighbourhood the Old Man of Fronteja, a name which is now grown so general that I have adopted it myself."

It may easily be conceived that Rinaldo was much struck with a name mentioned in Olympia's letter, and which recalled to his mind the account given him by the Marquis Romano of this man, with whom he had become so unexpectedly acquainted, and was now conversing. At this sudden discovery, the forms of Olympia, the marquis, and the captain, seemed to stand before him, and he knew not whether to advance forward with the old man, or to hasten away from his presence and return home. He dreaded a meeting with these persons, thought himself betrayed, and considered his aged companion as his mortal enemy.

Having arrived at a small altar, the old man plucked two roses, laid them on the altar, raised his eyes to heaven, and cried with a loud voice, "A sacrifice of friendship!" He then turned to Rinaldo and said, "Stranger, here you are in safety."

"What should I fear?" said Rinaldo, in a proud tone.

"Men," replied the old man, and went on without seeming particularly to notice the inquiry.

"Men there are everywhere," answered Rinaldo, "and I have nothing to fear that others may not fear also."

"With us," continued the old man, "I have told you, you are among friends."

Rinaldo now proceeded with his conductor without speaking another word, and the latter showed him his dwelling, which was built in a very noble and antique style. Upon the mountains stood hermitages, which, as the old man said, younger men than himself inhabited, but who devoted themselves to various studies and contemplations

"Is the number of your young men great?" inquired Rinaldo.

"Thrice seven," replied the old man.

They now entered the house, in the middle room of which the old man regaled his guest with an excellent breakfast, while himself ate only a few spoonfuls of honey, and some thin slices of white bread. He drank no wine, and his beverage was milk.

"Have you lived here long?" asked Rinaldo.

"Not long," answered the old man, "and yet longer than the age of man."

Rinaldo cast at him a look of doubt and surprise, and at length inquired, "You have already exceeded the usual bounds of the life of man?"—"Twice," was his reply.

Rinaldo now beheld him with increased surprise. But the old man seemed not to notice it; and Rinaldo was about to inquire further, when he heard female voices singing, and saw two young women in veils pass by, hand in hand.

"Who are these?" said Rinaldo.—"Two of my scholars," replied the old man.

"Do women live here also?"—"Daughters of wisdom; priestesses in the temple of nature and of truth."

Rinaldo was again silent, and the old man invited him to accompany him to a simple apartment, where he found a couch, on which the old man seated himself, and Rinaldo followed his example.

The old man now broke silence and said, "From my earliest youth upwards I was a friend and eager inquirer into all mysteries; and to this day, I must tell you that I have always succeeded in developing the secrets of all ages and nations."

Rinaldo beheld him with surprise, and the old man proceeded. "I studied the symbolical mythology of the Greeks and Egyptians, the theogony, cosmogony, and all the sacred learning of the most ancient nations; I studied the shaster of the Gentoos, the zendavesta of the Persians, the edda of the Icelanders, the chou-king and ly-king of the Chinese. I developed the nature of the kakosephia and kakodæmonia, studied the anthroposophia, and at length became what I am now—a true theosophist. This name I have now adopted: you must imagine it took a long period of time to accomplish so much, and that time heaven has granted me."

Here the theosophist paused, and then said, "Friend, why did you quit the castle without mentioning your intention? You have caused uneasiness there on account of your absence."—"To whom?" inquired Rinaldo.

The old man made no answer, but pointed to a large mirror, formed of a plate of polished metal. Rinaldo looked, and, to his utter astonishment, beheld Laura and Ludovico, as it were, in person before him. The motion of their hands and features showed they were conversing on some subject very interesting to them.

"I hear them speak," said the old man.—"Speak?" said Rinaldo. "You cannot hear them," returned the old man, "but I hear with the cast of the soul, which brings me close to them."—"What do they say?"—The lady is uneasy at your departure, and your servant is telling her he imagines you are gone only on some little excursion; but she is not satisfied with this explanation."

Rinaldo was silent for a few moments, nor did the old man disturb his reflections. When Rinaldo again turned his eyes towards the mirror, he saw Laura in her chamber, and the secretary in her arms. He turned his eyes, and said, "Friend, you are a great man."—"What I am you may be also," said the old man; "I am not the only man of my kind in the world."

Rinaldo now, with a deep sigh, asked, "Do you know me?"—"Why should I not?" replied the old man, and pointed to the mirror.

Rinaldo looked again, and beheld his own likeness in his banditti dress, upon the Appennines, in front of Donato's hermitage. He started, and said, "Do you know Donato?"—"Why should I not?" inquired the old man, and again pointed to the mirror, where Donato appeared *labouring in his garden.*

"I will now," said the old man, "show you some other persons of your acquaintance. Behold the mirror; they will pass across it."

Rinaldo now perceived the Prince Della Roccella, the father of Aurelia. He seemed pacing to and fro in an apartment, and reading a book. The scene changed, and Rinaldo beheld the inside of a cell in a convent, where Aurelia lay asleep upon a bed. He sighed, and cast his eyes downwards. When he again raised them, he saw the Countess Martagno sitting in an arbour and weeping. Rinaldo now sighed with increased emotion; and the scene again changing, a female pilgrim appeared travelling in a desert country—it was Rosalia.

"Is she still alive?" cried Rinaldo. "She is," replied the old man.

"Shall I again see her, and speak to her?"

The old man seemed to reflect, and then said, "Upon that I cannot answer you with certainty to-day."

Rinaldo was silent; and the old man asked, "Would you see any more of your acquaintance?"—"None," replied Rinaldo.

A curtain of blue silk now fell, and covered the mirror; and Rinaldo repeated, "Friend, you are indeed a great man,"

The old man smiled, and said, "Mere magic. Upon you my pride does not repose." After a short pause, he continued, "You shall see how deeply I am versed in the obscure mysteries. I will show you all the degrees of the celebrated Krata Repoa, which comprehended the sacred science of the Egyptians. I have unveiled it. My young men and young women shall perform that spectacle before you. It will at least serve as a subject for conversation and of reflection."

Having said this, he arose, took Rinaldo by the hand, and introduced him into a beautiful hall, whose walls were painted with symbols of the gods of all nations, and many allegorical statues stood beside the windows. It was also decorated with a gallery and a beautiful ceiling, representing Œdipus answering the riddle of the Sphynx.

In an antichamber soft music was heard, accompanied with female voices. Meanwhile the old man walked in silence to and fro, across the room, with Rinaldo.

When the music ceased, the old man said, "Man consists of body and soul. Both seek their particular pleasures and enjoyments. I envy not each what it desires, within the limits that are permitted. Harmony is the chain that unites all beings—the universal law of all things. You know what has been said of the music of the spheres. I love music, whether vocal or instrumental. Both lie within us, and we give and receive it with pleasure. The highest expressions of delight are very pleasing music to the ear of those who understand them. Even pain has its appropriate chords, adapted to feeling and harmonious hearts."

As he said this, a table was brought in, covered with a variety of food and drink, of which the old man pressed Rinaldo to partake. Himself only ate some thin slices of white bread, a couple of spoonfuls of honey, and some ananas; his drink was milk.

When the table was removed, the theosoph took his visitor by the hand, and led him into another apartment, on the black marble cornice of which were inscribed, in letters of gold, the words—

ΚΡΑΤΑ ΡΕΠΟΑ.

"Here," said he, "you shall see the spectacle I promised, called the Krata Repoa," and then he reclined on a couch. Rinaldo followed his example.

Rinaldo received from the old man some previous instruction relative to the secrets of the Egyptian mysteries, and then saw the spectacle performed, in which the initiated went through all the seven degrees of the Krata Repoa. He saw him ascending the holy ladder, consisting of seven steps, amid thunder and lightning; heard the language of the Hierophants; saw the gate of man and the black chamber, the temptation scene of the beautiful priestsesses opposite to whom the initiated stood; the water scene, the serpent chamber, the griffin, and the columns. He saw the initiated pass through the gate of death, and refuse the crown; beheld him in Orcus, and heard the lessons given him. Here he fancied he saw the battle of the shades, the pit of the fiend, and the dead virgin. He saw the battle of Orus and Typhon, and the great trial by fire. He saw the initiated before the gate of the gods; the priests

dance, representing the course of the stars; after which the initiated drank the drink of Oimellas, and his trials ended in his final reception into the great sanctuary.

This spectacle having continued a long time, Rinaldo was again regaled with refreshments, after which the old man said, "Now, my friend, return to the castle you have left, where your presence will this night be needful. Think of your friend at Fronteja, and ponder well in your heart what you have seen and heard."

Rinaldo now took his way to the castle, where he banished by his presence all the uneasiness his absence had occasioned.

At length the family retired to rest, but sleep still shunned the eyes of Rinaldo, till towards midnight there was suddenly a loud confused noise in the castle. He heard the clashing of swords, the barking of dogs, a loud cry from without, and at lenght the report of two muskets.

Upon this he sprang from his bed, threw on a bed-gown, took a pair of pistols and his sabre and ran to the hall, where he found Laura and her father, pale and trembling. The maid-servants were there with lights, and equally terrified. The noise of arms still increased, and the firing grew louder and louder.

"What is the matter?" said Rinaldo.—"The castle is attacked by robbers," cried a servant, who was wounded: "we are too weak to repel them, and several of my fellow-servants are killed."

Ludovico now rushed by with a drawn sabre, crying, "Let us defend the entrance of the hall."

Rinaldo flew to the hall door, while the robbers were pressing up the marble stairs in triumph.

"Halt!" cried Rinaldo, with a voice of thunder; "say who you are, and what is your will?"—"Who dares to ask us?" said one of the troop.

"*I* do," replied Rinaldo.—"Aha! not so free with your orders. If you do not make way, it will cost you your life."

"Halt, I say, and take notice with whom you have to deal."—"Back, and lose not your breath in idle words."

"Halt! and beware my name do not strike you to the earth."

Here the robbers burst into a laugh, and one of them replied, "Men who fear not your sword will laugh at your name."—"Not at mine."

At this they laughed again, and cried, "Forwards!" But Rinaldo called out to them in a dreadful voice, "Halt! 'tis the command of Rinaldini."

At this the robbers were struck, and at length one of them inquired, "Where is Rinaldini?"—"I am he," replied Rinaldo.

"Profane not that celebrated name; I have served under Rinaldini, and know him."—"If you know him, come hither, and order your comrades to halt."

Rinaldo now quitted the doorway, and walking back to the middle of the hall, took a light from one of the women. Ludovico also, to whom Rinaldo had given a hint to that effect, did the same, and lighted the candles in the chandeliers. Meanwhile Rinaldo continued in his place, and the baron and Laura, in trembling expectation, waited to see what would happen.

The man who boasted that he knew Rinaldini now bid his companions, who were pressing through the doorway, to halt, and going up to Rinaldo with uncertain steps, paused, looked steadfastly at him, dropped the point of his sabre, and said, "Great captain! I bend my knee to you; yes, you are Rinaldini, my most renowned captain!"

Upon this the whole troop instantly exclaimed, "Viva Rinaldini!"

"I cannot," said Rinaldo, "return, or even accept your salutation, till I find you obedient to my commands."

"Pronounce them," cried they all, as if with one mouth.—"Pronounce them," repeated one of the troop, "pronounce them, most renowned captain; that which we are bound to give you, you shall receive."

"Then I command you," said Rinaldo, "immediately to leave this castle."

Upon this a silence at first prevailed, then a murmur arose, and at length one of them stepped forward, and said, "We have no money, and are destitute of the means of sub-

sistence; for this reason we have undertaken this enterprise, in which we have succeeded. You know, captain, whither necessity will drive us. But to show you how great a respect we feel for such renowned men as you, we will leave the castle, if you will promise to come to us and stay with us for awhile as a friend; if you refuse this, we will not go; for, however brave and famous you are, you will see that force shall not drive us hence. Count our numbers—we are eighty of us in the castle, all armed, and none of us afraid of death; resolution is our constant companion, and there are thirty more without who are by no means unworthy to be called our fellows in arms."

"Are you," said Rinaldo, "captain of these brave fellows?"—"I am."—"Your name?"—"Luigino."—"Then come forward and prepare for battle; you shall have the honour to fight with Rinaldini. If you are victorious, do what you please in the castle, all I recommend is humanity; if you are beat, depart, together with your people. These are the conditions of the battle."

Luigino beheld him with astonishment, and said, "I will not fight with you."

"Then, in the presence of your people," replied Rinaldino, "I call you a cowardly cut-purse."

"By heavens, captain," said Luigino, "I am no coward, nor will I suffer myself to be called so, even by you." Thus saying, he drew his sabre.

Laura now started up with impetuosity, and threw herself into Rinaldo's arms, saying, "You shall not fight, nor shall you thus hazard your life for us. We will come to a compromise with the men, and give them what they want. Is it not enough that we are indebted to you for our lives? Must we also see our benefactor and preserver bleed for us?"

"Go, Luigino," said Rinaldo, "and declare that a maid has deprived you of the honour of fighting with Rinaldini. I know and acknowledge you to be a man of courage."

Luigino put his sword in the scabbard, and said, "We will go."

"Not so," said the baron, holding out a small box. "Here, take this money," continued he, "and buy what you want." Meanwhile Rinaldo took a ring from his finger, and said, "Luigino, wear this ring as a token of remembrance."

Luigino took the ring, and asked, in a tone of disappointment, "And will you not come to us?"—"I will," replied Rinaldo.

Upon this the troop hallooed, and a general cry arose, of "Viva Rinaldini!"

"Leave this man with me," continued Rinaldo, "he fought with me in the Appenines. He will show me the way."

Luigino turned towards him, and said, "Brave Nero, who fought under Rinaldini, stay with your captain, and bring him to us soon." Having said this, he took Rinaldo's hand and pressed it, saying, "This moment I shall never forget!" Then turning round, he gave his companions a sign, who rushed down stairs and out of the castle, with Luigino at their head. Rinaldo now gave Ludovico and Nero a hint to leave him, as did the baron to his attendants; and Rinaldo remained alone with him and Laura.

"You have heard," said Rinaldo, "my most sacred and important secret, and many others have heard it also; this renders it absolutely necessary I should immediately take my leave of you. The persecuted and proscribed robber-captain can never more be seen in your family, or become the object of your friendship and hospitality. Your rank and situation, as well as the laws, forbid it. Night, which conceals all things, will also hide me from you. Farewell, I must depart."

"Your generosity," said the baron, "has discovered your secret, in order to save us from instant death. This night is indelibly impressed on my memory, nor do I lament anything so keenly as that you must leave us. Twice you have saved my life, and I am doubly your debtor. How shall I—how can I compensate you?"

Rin.—You can.

Baron.—Indeed!

Rin.—You can.

Baron.—Then I am richer than I imagined. That which I can, I will.

Rin.—Promise that you will grant my request.

Baron.—I do; and rejoice that I can repay you by its fulfilment.

Rin.—My request then is, that you give your daughter to the man she loves.

Baron (*starting*).—Heavens! what have I promised?

Rin.—You have passed your word.

Baron (hesitating).—Alas! then, take her.

Rin.—You misconceive me. I am not the man of her choice.

Baron (reviving).—Did I, indeed, mistake you?

Rin.—Give her to the man she loves. Remember your promise.

Baron.—I am your debtor, and will pay you. I will keep my word. She shall have him.

Rin.—Laura, I shall now depart happy, since I know you are so.

Laura first embraced her benefactor, then threw herself at her father's feet. Rinaldo left the hall, sent up the secretary, gave orders to saddle his horse, and, with Ludovico and Nero, left the castle.

By daybreak they had proceeded a considerable way, and the castle was no longer in sight. The sun arose in all the splendour of majesty, and Rinaldo, dismounting from his horse, gave Ludovico the bridle, and threw himself down beneath a tree. Ludovico and Nero followed their captain's example at some distance, and the horses began to graze.

Rinaldo sighed deeply, and, as his manner was when his heart was full, thus communed with himself: "That for which men thank my courage and my name, is to me a curse. Yet, though banished, dishonoured, and persecuted, I have, it is true, already eluded innumerable evils. But I have, alas! shed blood. How many have fallen by my side! how many have I sent to the grave! Ah, what prophetic voice could have foretold me such a life, when rocking me in the cradle of infancy? Alas! what fate tore me from my peaceful vales, from the spring, whose pure lymph fed both me and my goats in the solitude of pastoral innocence and virtue? Alas! alas! alas! what am I become?"

"Does the captain often thus talk to himself?" said Nero.

Ludovico gave a nod of assent, and made a sign for him to be silent. Meanwhile Rinaldo proceeded thus: "Shall I, then, never find repose? The mariner rejoices, when the storm is past, in the security of the harbour, and forgets the dangers of the seas; but to me no friendly port affords a welcome or a shelter."

Having paused awhile, he inquired of Nero how he came to Sicily; upon which Nero approached him, and said, "When you sent me to Rome, captain, our friend Cinthio came in search of me and Nicolo, and took us with him into Calabria. There I had a quarrel with one of my comrades, whose skull I split. As this man was a particular friend of Cinthio, I did not care to see him again, and came into Sicily. Here, having no other means of living, I had recourse to my old trade."

"How long have you been with Luigino?"—"Six months."

"Do you do well?"—"Pretty well; but not so well as with you."

"Where does Luigino harbour?"—"In the mountains of Cerone."

"Is it far from here?"—"We may arrive there about dusk."

"Show me the way."

They now mounted and trotted on. They dined at a miserable village, and before sunset arrived at the mountains of Cerone.

They had scarcely advanced a hundred paces, when they heard a horn, and after that several others. This was the signal given by Luigino's outposts. They soon came to a valley, where Nero gave a signal, upon which twenty of the banditti surrounded them, and raised a dreadful cry of rejoicing; after which they escorted Rinaldo to Luigino amidst cries of "*Viva valoroso Rinaldini! valorocissimo capitano del mondo!*" Upon which Luigino immediately sprang out of his tent, and helped Rinaldo to dismount.

The joy and confusion occasioned by the presence of the celebrated Rinaldini was very great; and even Luigino thought himself highly honoured by the most renowned captain of banditti of his day visiting him in his tent, and sleeping on his bed.

At break of day, Luigino perceiving his guest was already up, came to him with a proposal which was the result of his nocturnal reflections. It was no less than that he would take the command of his troop, and thereby, as he expressed himself, render it through him immortal.

"Friend," replied Rinaldo, "I am heartily obliged to you for your disinterested offer; but I cannot avail myself of it, since I am resolved to leave Sicily and go to some other country, where I may pass the remainder of my days in tranquillity and repose."

In vain did Luigino exert his utmost eloquence, for Rinaldo persisted in his intention. He stayed with him, however, the remainder of the day, and on the following took his departure with Ludovico and Nero.

Towards evening they reached an inn belonging to a village, from which it lay a few hundred paces distant, and out of the great road. The landlord, however, came out and said his house was so full of company, that he could not give the chevalier a decent bed; and that besides, a gentleman and lady had just arrived, together with their attendants, who would go no further that night, and had engaged the last bed his house afforded. But Rinaldo having no inclination to lengthen his day's journey, declared he would put up with any accommodations he could have; and immediately entered the inn-yard, where, as he dismounted, he cast his eyes on a carriage, from which the horses had just been taken off, and, as he was giving some directions relative to his baggage, he descried, to his great astonishment, his long-lost Signora Olympia; nor had he recovered his surprise, before he saw his enemy, the Corsican captain, come round from the other side of the carriage.

The latter no sooner perceived Rinaldo than he drew a pistol from the coach-pocket, and furiously rushed on Rinaldo, at the same time exclaiming, "Ha, villain! have I found you at last?" As he said this he fired, and the ball grazed Rinaldo's left shoulder.

Meanwhile Olympia screamed, and threw herself back in the carriage.

Ludovico no sooner saw what passed than he levelled his musket and fired, by which he broke the captain's right arm, who fell and cried with all his might, "Shut the gates! In the name of the king, seize this man! Rinaldini is here!"

Upon this a general confusion and uproar arose, and the landlord, his servants and waiters, the attendants of the captain, some muleteers, coachmen, and a couple of dragoons who were stationed there as patroles, fell upon Rinaldo with horsewhips, sticks, spades, pitchforks, and sabres.

A waiter ran to the gate to fasten it, but Nero shot him through the throat, and instantly galloped out of the inn full speed.

Rinaldo attempted to take out his pistols, but was suddenly seized from behind, and thrown down before he could fire. Six men fell upon him at once, who bound his feet, and tied his hands behind his back.

Ludovico cut down one of the captain's servants through the head, and cut off half the arm of another; but he received a blow on the head and fell, upon which he was treated like his master. He gnashed his teeth, and impotent rage distorted every feature of his face.

Rinaldo beheld him with a look of reproach, and said, "For shame, Ludovico! Why those unmanly gestures? Every one has his destiny, and our hour is come."—"'Tis not that enrages me," said Ludovico, roaring with rage; "but that a handful of cowardly lubbers should thus overpower us, and that we have not fallen fighting man to man in open combat."—"Such is the will of fate," replied Rinaldo; "be peaceful and quiet. We are not yet on the scaffold; but even should we end our lives there, yet we are not at present in a situation to help ourselves."

Meanwhile the captain had strictly enjoined the landlord and the dragoons to keep the strictest guard over the prisoners, and told them the price they would receive from government for their extraordinary valour. Hence they resolved to watch them throughout the night, and the next morning to proceed with them in triumph, and deliver them up to the nearest tribunal.

The prisoners were therefore brought into a room, where they were strictly guarded. The captain was carried to bed, his wounds dressed as well as could be done till a surgeon should arrive, and Olympia remained in the greatest embarrassment and distress.

Meanwhile the landlord collected together all those who had taken an active part in the struggle, and in securing the prisoners, and thus addressed them: "See, upon this table I have set down, in chalk, the proportion each of us is entitled to receive of the price set by the government on the head of Rinaldini. This is the account, exact as a parish rate. Besides which, we shall also gain great fame and honour, and the thanks and respect of the whole island, and my inn will become extremely celebrated and frequented."

'But," said one of the muleteers, at the same time twisting his cap from his right to his left ear, "do you think Rinaldini's gang will leave one stone of your inn upon another?"

Rin.—You have passed your word.

Baron (hesitating).—Alas! then, take her.

Rin.—You misconceive me. I am not the man of her choice.

Baron (reviving).—Did I, indeed, mistake you?

Rin.—Give her to the man she loves. Remember your

Baron.—I am your debtor, and will pay you. I will

Rin.—Laura, I shall now depart happy, since I k

Laura first embraced her benefactor, then thre
the hall, sent up the secretary, gave orders to
left the castle.

By daybreak they had proceeded a cor
The sun arose in all the splendour
gave Ludovico the bridle, and threw
their captain's example at some di

Rinaldo sighed deeply, and,
with himself: "That for whic
though banished, dishonour
evils. But I have, alas!
sent to the grave! A
ing me in the cradle
spring, whose pur
and virtue? A

"Does the

Ludovic
proceeded
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He
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. .most anxiety, "Has

...gine; a band of fellows that
...r me, were I in your place, I
...he might escape; that would
...now have to settle with his gang."
...place, and, with the money I receive,

...company.
...sent for by Olympia. He went out to
...said, "Landlord, you are a most fortunate
...at your house; but whatever you may gain by it
...means to favour his escape."
...landlord, "that is now impossible; it might be done,
...And then my duty and allegiance as a subject——"
...interrupting him, "you are a brave fellow; I frankly confess
...for you cannot doubt that I shall be very glad to see this
...punished; I only wanted to know if the villain were in safe
...also reward you. Now I shall sleep in peace, since I am under
...and the landlord murmured as she went, "A very good lady

...to have some wine and refreshments, which he obtained; and Ludovico,
...himself, was now as firm and resolute as his master was discouraged and cast
...They began to converse in their robber jargon, of which their guards did not under-
...and talked of their misfortunes and present situation; when Rinaldo confessed
...to take poison. But Ludovico advised him by no means to be so rash and
...and began even to hope some help might soon arrive.

Rin.—From whom can you expect it?

Lud.—That I know not, but yet I have hopes. My courage has unexpectedly returned, and I am fully persuaded we shall not die this time. And, in fact, 'tis much the same to tear our entrails by poison, or to be burnt to death. Death is death, and pain is pain.

Rin.—Do you think so?

Lud.—'Tis certain. But three things vex me horribly.

Rin.—What are they?

Lud.—First, that the ball did not go through the captain's head; secondly, that a parcel of muleteers and drivers should master us; and, thirdly, that Nero has forsaken us like a coward. Had we all three stood by each other, and cut our way out, the rascals would have had the worst of it, or I will acknowledge myself for a coward.

Thus they conversed till midnight, and at length fell asleep on their bed of straw. After a time they were suddenly waked by a noise, and, starting up, beheld two men in the room with drawn daggers, while their guards lay snoring on the ground.

"Who is there?" said Rinaldini.—"Hush, captain!" said they; "we are come to save you."

Rinaldo, thinking he knew the voice, asked, "Are you not Nero?"—"I am," replied he; "the house is surrounded, and I and one of my brave comrades have found our way in. 'Tis now daybreak; be quick and rise." Upon this they cut Rinaldo's cords, and helped him up.

"Nero," said Ludovico, "I have been unjust to you; I accused you of being a coward; I beg your pardon, my brave comrade."—"Aha!" replied Nero, "that I expected; but no mattter; I set off, and fell in with Luigino's outposts, from which I dispatched a man to the captain, informing him of what had happened. The other eight I took with me; we mounted, and here we are. Luigino, I am sure, is not far off."

"Nero," said Rinaldo, "I will certainly reward you and your comrades handsomely for this service."

"Come, captain. down stairs; here are arms, should there be any alarm."

Thus they slipped out, and all remained quiet in the house. The rest of the party waited

court, and took as many horses and mules from the stables as they wanted, and then an was given.

ket then appeared in the air before the inn. "Ha!" cried they all, "that is Luial." They were now incapable of restraint, and six balls were fired at once into the e several men were lying upon straw, and thereupon a dreadful cry arose.

me time, the gate was broke open by those without, and Luigino's party rushed where the alarm was given in all quarters, and the stables instantly emptied.

no found Rinaldo was saved, he embraced him, and at the same time gave the ure. The robbers, however, fired off their pistols towards the above-men- and stable, and set off with their booty. They had scarcely advanced a hundred efore they heard the alarm-bell rung, and, looking behind them, beheld the whole inn ames.

A wild outcry prevailed throughout the premises, and Rinaldo's heart misgave him. He covered his face with his hands, and pursued his way to the mountains.

Watching and reflecting on his situation and prospects, Rinaldo lay upon his bed, beneath a tent. The greater part of the band were gone upon various expeditions, and with them Ludovico and Nero. Luigino came up to Rinaldo, looked at him awhile, and said, "Captain, you perceive that you cannot live out of our circle. The civilized world is not a fit place for you. Stay in these uninhabited valleys, and in woods and solitudes, feared and honoured, at the head of your comrades. Do not abandon yourself to cares, for such is your destiny, and the will of fate.

Rin.—I feel the truth of your observation but too strongly.

Luigino.—I am glad of it. I renew my former offer. Place yourself at the head of my troop, and I will serve under you as your second in command.

Rin.—I will stay with you, but I cannot take the command of your band. Yet in case of need, you may rely upon me as much as any of your men.

Luig.—As you please. In any case, your presence will have a great effect on them, and they will all consider themselves as serving under you.

While they were thus speaking, the signal of return was heard from a party who had been out, and had taken booty; and Ludovico, almost breathless, entered the tent, saying, "Captain, we have taken a great prize, one that will give you much pleasure. That cursed Corsican and the beauteous Olympia have fallen into our hands."

While he was yet speaking, they were both brought, bound, into the tent, upon which the whole troop exclaimed, "*Viva valorosissimo Capitano Rinaldini.*"

Rinaldo started and shuddered, when he beheld the prisoners bound. Olympia threw herself on her knees before him, and said, "I surrender myself to your mercy."

Rinaldo made a sign for her to rise, and answered, "I am not captain of the party that has taken you, but this man who stands near me. To him address your petition. I am not your judge; but since I am indebted to you, Olympia, for my life and deliverance in Calabria, I request my friend Luigino, for my sake, to give you your liberty."

"She is free," Luigino instantly exclaimed. Upon which her bonds were taken off, and Luigino continued thus: "But as to what concerns this captain, take him to the cavern, and imprison him till I have learnt from Ludovico all that he has done against my friend the great Rinaldi."

The captain, who had hitherto stood motionless, now raised his voice, and said, "What I have done against Rinaldini, every good citizen would have done also, who should see the chief of robbers among his fellow-citizens."

Luigino now gave some of his men the wink, which they immediately understood, and took the captain out of the tent.

Olympia had placed herself upon a camp stool, and Rinaldo continued lying upon his bed, while Luigino went out of the tent.

Olym.—Oh, thou celebrated Rinaldini! thou, who art the fear and terror of all the states of Italy——

Rin.—Oh, speak not thus!

Olym.—Are you really not the leader of these men?

Rin.—I am not.

Olym.—Yet you live among them?

Rin.—That is not my fault. I must not, cannot return to the bosom of civilized society.

Olym.—If you are averse to that, remain in your valleys, and live in tranquillity among the rocks, nor restrain yourself within the narrow bounds of society. What you would there find is easy to be forborne. Oh that it were my lot to live in such peaceful solitude!

Rin.—Then go to the old man of Fronteja.

Olym.—Do you know him?

Rin.—How could I say I know him? I have indeed seen and spoken to him, and he has said and shown to me a great many things, and even a representation of his Krata Repoa. But how shall I venture to say I know him? Do you know him?

Olym.—I have never seen or spoken to him, and yet imagine I know him.

Rin.—This solemn, mysterious, all-grasping impostor?

Olym.—He is still more. The chains he has contrived to throw over all Italy, and even across the sea, are a work that speaks the praise of the master. Since you have become so famous, you have been an important object of his wishes; you became a link of the chain for which he sought; he found you before you knew it; you were his before he saw you.

Rin.—What say you?

Olym.—That which I know.

As she said this, she smiled as one who spoke with conscious certainty. Rinaldo cast his eyes on the ground. Three shots were heard at no great distance. Olympia went to the entrance of the tent, but instantly returned, and Rinaldo beheld her with an inquiring countenance.

Olym.—Alas! they are bringing the corpse of the captain.

Rin.—Is he dead?

Olym.—Your most bitter enemy in this world.

Olym.—Does he also belong to the chain of the old man of Fronteja?

Olym.—He was an apostate.

Rin.—How did he live?

Olym.—By speculation, gaming, and magic; but with you his greatest prize, and that on which he placed his chief reliance, escaped him.

Rin.—How came you to return to this deceiver?

Olym.—Through want of money.

Rin.—Your noble attachment——

Olym.—Was formed by necessity, and broken off by disgust.

Rin.—What do you now intend to do?

Olym.—To throw myself into your arms, and continue with you; with you to brave all dangers, even death itself. By your side will I fight——

Rin.—I will fight no more. I will exchange my sword for spades and ploughshares.

Olym.—And turn hermit?

Rin.—The same.

Olym.—Then I will accompany you as a female hermit; in my arms shall you repose when you return fatigued with the heat and labours of the day. As a careful housewife will I refresh you with a wholesome repast, and peaceful joy shall never be absent from your hermitage. Come, my Rinaldo, let us go and sojourn in the tranquil asylum of happiness and peace. I shall feel no hardships; my affection for you will smoothe every path, and convert perils into security.

Rin.—You rave.

Olym.—Because I am with the object of my love.

They were now interrupted by a loud conversation without the tent. Luigino, who knew how to live, had ordered a sumptuous entertainment to be prepared, which was now brought in. No attendants, however, importuned the guests, who, free from restraint, abandoned themselves to the feelings of their hearts.

The cork now flew from a bottle of champagne with a loud report, and struck the tender fair one on the forehead. at which the company laughed, and proceeded to empty the bottle.

Again they burst into a roar, when Luigino came and said, "My people have taken a pilgrim who knows Ludovico."

"'Tis Rosalia," cried Rinaldo, who instantly sprang up, rushed out of the tent, and flew to the arms of Rosalia.

After the first effusions of joy, Rosalia told Rinaldo, that having escaped on the night of the bloody affray in Calabria, she had long wandered in solitudes, and had at length come to Sicily, through whose lonely vales she had travelled in a pilgrim's dress, till at length she had now obtained the object of her heart's desire, by again finding her dear Rinaldo.

During this interview, Olympia behaved with great prudence and discretion, but Rosalia could not conceal her jealousy. She confessed her fears and suspicions to Rinaldo, who endeavoured to pacify her to the utmost of his power.

Meanwhile Luigino observed what passed, and as soon as he was alone with Rinaldo, took the liberty thus to express his opinion :—

Luig.—I perceive, captain, that report said true, when it painted you as a declared admirer of women; nor have you been caricatured in this respect by the picture that has been drawn of you.

Rin.—Perhaps, however, they exceeded the truth.

Luig.—That I will not decide—I only speak of what I see.

Rin.—And what do you see?

Luig.—That you have two of them with you at once, both of whom you have loved and love still.

Rin.—And what inference do you draw?

Luig.—I will frankly confess I do not think it becomes you to toy away your time with women.

Rin.—Are you a woman-hater?

Luig.—By no means. But my friendship for them only admits of giving them a few passing moments, when passion surprises me. But then it is soon over. Both of us pursue a course of life in which we can neither give our wives a house to live in, nor a comfortable home. Our children we cannot educate; and if we could, to what could we bring them up?—to what but a course like ours?—and since we cannot send them forth into the world, shall we bring them up directly for the gallows? That we would neither of us do.

Rin.—Then let us leave this course.

Luig.—What! for the sake of women?

Rin.—I have treasures which are safely buried, and may again be found. The Canary Islands are blessed with the finest of climates. Thither rich valleys and happy plains invite us. Take a wife, and follow me.

Luig.—I cannot resolve on such a step.

Rin.—And why not?

Luig.—I am afraid of a tranquillity which may permit conscience to awaken. Are you not afraid of it also?

Rin.—I open my heart to the delights of peace; I hear her conciliatory voice, and obey her call.

Luig.—And what can you do? Repent, perhaps? But can you undo what is done and past?

Rin.—We may make restitution.

Luig.—At what price will you pay for flames, blood, and robbery?

Rin.—At whatever price the greatest penitence can require.

Luig.—And though you build churches and altars, will they procure you happy dreams? Can a deliberate retrospect of your past life procure you peace? You have intoxicated yourself. You will awaken, and then, alas! nothing but another intoxicating draught can soothe you.

Rin.—Not so, Luigino; not so.

Luig.—It is my maxim to act on some fixed plan. Mine was formed before I began to pursue this course of life.

Rin.—Indeed?

Luig.—Hollo! Marco! some wine!

Rinaldo looked with an inquiring countenance at Luigino, who drew a seat to the table, and sitting down as the wine came in, poured some out and drank.

Luig.—Wine, they say, brings out the truth. You shall hear my story. I am by birth a Corsican, and my father was governor of Bastia. But Luigino is not my true name. My father was a very worthy man, who loved his country, and hated its oppressors the French. His sentiments were not unknown, and the French general watched him narrowly. There arose an insurrection in the valley of Ajaccioli, where a French officer had dishonoured the wife of a Corsican. The latter having killed the criminal, the general ordered the Corsican to be bound, and condemned him to death; his countrymen, however, rescued him, and took up arms. My father was called upon to suppress this rebellion; but he was so imprudent as to reply, that he would only bear arms against the enemies of his country. On this account he was thrown into prison, where the general ordered him to be strangled, as one guilty of high treason. My mother made me take an oath to revenge my father's death, and plunged a poniard in her own bosom. With the same poniard I killed the French general, took refuge among the mountains, and afterwards came on board an English vessel to Sicily; and my property being confiscated, and my name publicly exposed, took to the course of life I have since pursued. This was my choice and my plan. I have now about ninety men under my command, who know how to fight, and it would be easy to increase their numbers. There are ships to be bought; you, Rinaldini, have money; employ some of it in a naval expedition, and deserve the blessings of an oppressed country.

Rin.—Luigino?

Luig.—Come with me to Corsica, and break the fetters of my countrymen. Thousands will join us, and your now dishonoured name will be recorded with glory in the annals of history; whereas your amours will never procure you the honour of becoming the deliverer of an injured but brave nation. At present you wander like a vagabond from one hole and corner to another, and are contemned, persecuted, and proscribed, like the most abject criminal who basely murders the unwary passenger; whereas you have but to desire it, to soar upon the wings of fame to the the temple of immortality. Your robberies will be forgotten, and the whole world will talk of your glorious deeds. The press and the mint, triumphal arches and statues, will perpetually record your bravery; your bust will live in the temple of Fame, and your name be classed with the deliverers of nations. If you must change your mode of life, be this your choice, and your lot will be at once great and enviable.

Rin.—Luigino! some god has inspired thee with these noble thoughts!

Luig.—Rinaldini!

Rin.—Give me your hand. Corsica shall be emancipated.

Luig.—Corsica shall be free. The thought was mine; yours shall be the fame.

Rin.—Oh, Luigino, the sound of the broken chains of your country shall silence the voice of conscience, and every self-reproach shall be hushed in the soothing harmony of recovered freedom; with the regeneration of your country, a new day will dawn upon our lives.

Marco now entered, and whispered something to Luigino, who sprang up, and went out with him.

Meanwhile Rinaldo looked for Rosalia, and Olympia also joined him. "All is not right," said she.

"What is not right?" replied Rinaldo.—"There is a talk of soldiers, of an attack, and of a defence," replied Olympia.

Rinaldo left his tent, went in search of Luigino, and found Rosalia weeping beneath a tree. When she saw Rinaldo approach, she endeavoured to conceal her tears, but in vain.

Rin.—You have been weeping, Rosalia; say for what cause?

Ros.—I—the pleasure that—I have—in seeing you again, and——

Rin.—No excuses or disguises. Why have you been weeping?

Ros.—I scarcely know myself. I was thinking——

Rin.—What were you thinking?

Ros.—I was thinking—that if Rinaldo ——Ah, what a child I am.

Rin.—Proceed.

Ros.—If Rinaldo should no longer love me?

Rin.—Why were you thinking that?

Ros.—Because—I scarcely know why myself.

Rin.—I must know all.

Ros.—The signora——

Rin.—Should give you no uneasiness.

Ros.—I love.

Rin.—So do I.

Ros.—Me?

Rin.—You.

Ros.—Alone?

Rin.—No jealousy, when I assure you I love you.

Ros.—I love you alone; and—oh, Rinaldo, command me to leave you, or dismiss the signora; I cannot say while she is here.

Rin.—Oh, you little simpleton.

Ros.—I love you so dearly.

Rin.—If you go, Olympia will stay; if you stay, she will go, and so all will be well. Besides, my requesting you to stay is the same as to command the signora, you hate so bitterly, to leave me. Can you desire more?

Ros.—All I desire is your love, and that undivided.

Rin.—You have known me already; did I ever act otherwise towards you than generously?

Ludovico now came running to Rinaldo, with intelligence that it was expected they would be presently surrounded by troops. Luigino therefore visited the outposts, and reinforced the guard at the entrance of the mountain-valley.

VOLUME III.—CHAPTER I.

Upon receipt of the intelligence conveyed by Ludovico, Rinaldo set forward in search of Luigino, who appeared somewhat dejected. Rinaldo asked him the cause.

Luig.—I have received certain intelligence that we are surrounded.

Rin.—And does that confound you, Corsican?

Luig.—Not that, because we may cut our way through; but when I reflect that this very night, perhaps, after forming so noble a plan, our company may be cut short——

Rin.—It will not be. But are we really surrounded?

Luig.—About a league off, all around us, are a body of above four hundred men.

Rin.—What do you intend to do?

Luig.—To wait their attack.

Rin.—My advice is to strike through to the south side of the mountain, and get to the mountain of Larino, where you will have woods in the rear, and a chain of mountains on your flank.

Luig.—I am very willing, if you will but fight with us.

Rin.—I will. Choose me out sixteen of the boldest of your band, besides whom I will take Nero and Ludovico. We will throw the troops into an alarm, while you are cutting your way through with the women and the baggage; after which we will soon find means to join you.

Luigino immediately gave orders to strike the tents, and to collect the baggage, together with the women and children, in the centre of the camp. Rinaldo was furnished with the men he desired; each of whom was armed with a doubled-barrelled gun and two pair of pistols, besides his sword. Ludovico and Nero joined them; and Rinaldo having taken an affectionate leave of Rosalia, and recommended her to Luigino's particular care and protection, marched to the pass, where he drew in the advanced guard, and ordered them to join

the main body. He then marched slowly along the plain, and at daybreak gave the signal of attack.

They turned the first picket of the enemy they met, and the second was almost cut to pieces; after which the alarm was given through the whole front. They now heard firing on the mountain, which grew weaker and weaker, till at length it wholly ceased. Upon which Rinaldo concluded the main body had opened a way through the enemy, and passed. Rinaldo, therefore, took to the right in order to leave the mountain behind him, and forced his way through a strong body of troops. Here he had a very brisk engagement, in which six of his men were killed; but at length the troops began to give way, and being then attacked with increased vigour, fell into complete disorder. Rinaldo's party took some horses from the enemy, and of his remaining twelve men, four were mounted, as was Rinaldo himself. He now marched slowly back towards the pass, whence he sent eight men up the mountain, while he himself, with Ludovico, Nero, Marco, and Mangato, all mounted, sought the plain, and wheeled to the left to reach the mountain of Larino on the west side. When they had advanced about half a league, they fell in with a body of thirty men, whom there was no possibility of avoiding. They, therefore, attacked them, broke their line, cut their way through, and then fell in with a patrol of cavalry of eight men. These they engaged, cut down two dragoons, and the rest took to flight. Nero and Mangato were wounded.

They now heard a tumult behind them. The men Rinaldo had detached to the mountain had found the pass strongly occupied, and therefore drew off towards the plains. Here they found three of their main body, who had been cut off, and whom they joined; while Terlini, a man of a shrewd mind, who had taken the command of them, vigorously attacked the troops Rinaldini had left in his rear. Rinaldo, perceiving by the firing that these men were engaged, hastened to succour them, and attacking the troops in the rear, soon routed them. Of ten men whom Terlini commanded, only two, besides Terlini himself, escaped unhurt; six were killed, and the rest were left mortally wounded upon the field. Terlini received one of the horses taken from the enemy for his bravery; his comrades, Romato and Bellione, were taken up behind by Ludovico and Marco; and thus they pursued their way till, having proceeded some leagues, a brisk fire at a small distance obliged them to strike into a wood opposite to them, which led them by daybreak into a forest, where, having penetrated a considerable way, they unsaddled their horses, and reposed themselves by a fountain. Having rested, the following conversation arose.

Rin.—What ails you, Terlini? Why do you seem so uneasy?

Terlini.—I am impatient at this delay.

Rin.—Even had we no need of it ourselves, we must necessarily rest our horses, if we wish them to carry us any further.

Ter.—But here we have no provisions.

Rin.—Of that, indeed, I feel the want. However, we will set forward as soon as possible. I have already formed a plan. Meanwhile, let me have your opinion relative to our proceedings; for I doubt not that every one of you has been silently reflecting upon it during this halt. Speak, Terlini! what think you?

Ter.—My opinion, in one word, is, that we should endeavour to get to the mountain of Larino, when we shall certainly fall in with Luigino.

Bellione.—That is my opinion also.

Romato.—And mine too; for here we are neither strong enough nor sufficiently secure to maintain our position, especially as we have neither provisions nor ammunition.

Rin.—These may be procured. What think the rest of you?

Marco.—I have no opinion but yours.

Mangato.—I am willing to do as you please. Go when you will, I will accompany you; but I own I wish to rejoin our comrades.

Rin.—Certainly.

Nero.—The only question is, whether the road to the mountain of Larino is open or not.

Rin.—That is the first object that must be investigated.

Lud.—It is undoubtedly surrounded by troops.

Ter.—We are eight of us——

Lud.—We have lost half our number.

Ter.—We have our hands and our swords, and, besides, we are mounted.

Lud.—Not all of us.

Ter.—We shall cut our way through.

Rin.—If it be possible we shall. But the greatest courage cannot perform impossibilities. Many of our men have fallen to rise no more. Shall we throw away our lives?

Nero.—Without necessity, it were folly.

Ter.—Well, captain, now let us hear your opinion.

Rin.—My opinion is, that you should go out upon the scout with Bellione and Romato. Let Marco and Magnato do the same, and procure provisions. The rest of us will reconnoitre the forest. Before us we perceive the ruins of a castle on a hill, in the midst of the trees; be that our rendezvous; there we will all meet again. This is my opinion, which, if it be disapproved, every one may do as he pleases, for I have no right to demand implicit obedience. You are under the command of Luigino. Ludovico and Nero belong to me, and will continue with me.

Ter.—Then I demand the rest to go with me; our wives and children are with Luigino.

Rin.—You are free to do as you please. If you go, take the horses with you. Here they are but an incumbrance to us.

Ter.—As you please.

Marco.—I will go with Terlini. Yet I am sorry to leave the great Rinaldini here without support.

Rin.—I have Ludovico and Nero with me.

Marco.—Should any misfortune befall you here, by heavens, Luigino will punish us severely.

Rin.—Fear not; we shall soon see each other again.

Here a pause ensued. At length Terlini gave Rinaldo his hand, and took leave of him. Marco, Romata, Bellione, and Mangato, followed his example, taking with them the horses, while Rinaldo remained behind with Ludovico and Nero.

Rinaldo silently ascended the hill where the ruins of the castle lay, and Nero followed him also in silence.

"Here," said Rinaldo, "are footsteps in the grass; be careful, and keep upon your guard."

As they approached the ruins, several birds took their flight but they saw no human creature. They entered a large court, built round, having door-ways without doors, and found a winding staircase, which they ascended. It led to the second story, where Rinaldo walked out on a platform, grown over with laurel, to take a view of the country. To the left, beyond the wood, he beheld a beautiful valley; to the right were mountains, and he was surprised to perceive some objects he remembered to have seen before. "Ludovico," cried he, "do you know that place to the right?"

Lud.—Yes, I know it well.

Rin.—Do you see yonder castle?

Lud.—Yes, by heavens! 'tis the castle of the good Countess of Martagno.

Rin.—It is.

Lud.—There we were well, and yet we could not stay there.

Rin.—We dare not stay where we are well; persecution always follows close at our heels.

Lud.—That is cursedly unfortunate.

Rin.—Ah, Dianora! art thou still within those walls? Thinkest thou still of thy unfortunate lover? O heavens! Ludovico, you must go.

Lud.—Go whither?

Rin.—To the neighbourhood of the castle. You must reconnoitre, and——

Lud.—I understand you, captain, you need not say another word. Leave it to me. You shall soon hear some news, at least as good as can be procured. Adieu. We shall soon meet again.

Thus saying, he hastened away, and Rinaldo remained deeply immersed in thought, till Nero awakened him from his reverie by observing that he saw a house in the forest.

Rinaldo looked towards the place, but could only see the roof. He immediately resolved to discover who inhabited the house, and left the castle, Nero following him in silence.

At length they came to an open place, and were scarcely ten paces from the house when

the sound of a guitar struck their ear, and induced them to stop. Upon listening they heard a voice singing, but could only distinguish the burden of the song, which recurred after every verse:—

"If thou lov'st me,
Then I love thee."

"Ha!" said Rinaldo, "since love is the subject of the song, we have little to fear. In the asylum of love and pleasure, no ambush awaits us." Thus saying, he advanced towards the house, and Nero involuntarily followed him, but being prepared for some mischance, took his musket in his hand upon the full cock.

Before the door sat a man in a brown hermit's dress, who had no sooner perceived the unexpected visitors than he laid down his guitar, and springing forward a few steps, stopped, and called out, "Is it possible? Do my eyes deceive me, or is it true? Are you really he? Do I see you again?"

"That voice," said Rinaldo; "good heavens, are you he; are you indeed my dear Cinthio?"

"I am," he cried, and instantly embraced Rinaldo.

"Yes, by heavens, it is Cinthio," said Nero.

Rin.—Oh, my friend, my Cinthio; and do we see each other again?

Cin.—My wish is fulfilled, my eager wish, that if you were alive, I might see you again; now my heart rejoices to meet its old friend.

Nero.—Embrace as long as you like, but give me a shake of the hand. You know me, old messmate, don't you?

Cin.—Ah, Nero! Welcome a thousand times

Nero.—Well, I am heartily rejoiced to see you again alive and hearty, and in a singing humour.

Cin.—Here in my house we will celebrate this unexpected meeting with a cheerful glass.

Nero.—By heavens we want something; we have fasted like so many Carthusians. If you have anything good, give us a little—it will taste excellently nice just now. 'Tis a pity Ludovico is not with us, for he would be glad of something also.

They now sat down to some refreshment of bread, cheese, butter, and wine. They ate with great appetite, and drank freely of the wine, during which the following conversation arose.

Rin.—But how came you here? And whose house is this?

Cin.—You shall hear presently. When I made my escape from that bloody affray in Calabria, I wandered about among the mountains, with my wounds, till I met with a good old hermit, who received me at his hermitage, dressed my wounds, and attended me. To this worthy man I discovered myself, and he expatiated so much to me on the excellence of virtue, that I promised him to forsake my former course of life, and to live with piety and strictness in a monastery.

Rin.—Excuse my laughing.

Cin.—Do not laugh; for though at first I was but half serious, I had nearly complied with his suggestions.

Nero.—Had you, by heavens?

Cin.—My benefactor gave me letters to a monastery, and I set forward on the way.

Rin.—I could almost imagine I saw you passing your noviciate there.

Cin.—However, I did not go.

Nero.—Ay, so I thought. One of Rinaldini's men and a monastery agree as little as fire and water: they would be always a variance.

Cin.—I unfortunately fell in with six of our comrades, who also made their escape. They had taken up their quarters in a cave of the mountain, and had been joined by five other robbers, with whom they carried on their old trade.

Nero.—That was very well.

Cin.—Thus I suffered myself to be persuaded to stay with them, and did not go to the monastery, but pursued my old course of life. I went further up the country, and took up my quarters in the mountain of Girace. Here my corps increased, and we were soon six-and-

twenty strong, when I resolved on striking a grand blow on a monastery, where we came off with the worst.

Nero.—Heavens!

Cin.—I know not whether our plan was betrayed, or whether fate would have it so, but the monks had a party of militia in the neighbourhood. Thus we met with a very bad reception, and I had nearly fallen into their hands.

Nero.—Thunder and lightning!

Cin.—Fortune, however, still enabled me to make my escape on board a corn-vessel bound for Malta. On board this vessel I sailed, and as we lay off Sicily, left her, and went up the country. Here I fell in with some fellows of my own stamp, whom I joined, and carried on, in a small way, the trade we had formerly pursued in a great. Having at length collected a good heap of gold, my people insisted on a division; which being complied with, they left me, saying, they had enough to get into some creditable business. Tired of robbery and plunder, I put on a traveller's dress; but my former habits and pursuits led me to seek out every hole and corner where I expected to find people of my own stamp. I was once so fortunate as to find two bags of gold, which had certainly belonged to some rich man, for they were sealed with a very large coat of arms.

Nero.—Indeed!

Cin.—I was scarcely possessed of this treasure before I began to think of retirement.

Rin.—Happy thought!

Cin.—I put on this dress, and went to a village about a league from this spot, where I waited on the forester of the place, whom I informed of my intention of living as a hermit. He told me his late master, the baron, had, three years before his death, adopted that mode of life through inclination; that he had built himself a house in the forest, and had lived as a hermit till his death; that his son lived in the town, was always in want of money, and would, doubtless, sell me the house. I bought it, and now live on my own estate.

Nero.—Aha!

Rin.—But how came you by a sweetheart?

Cin.—Who told you I had one?

Rin.—Your song.

Cin.—Aha! has it betrayed me? Well; yes, I have a sweetheart, a lovely good girl, who supplies me with milk, bread, eggs, butter, and other provisions, and visits me every three days. She is the forester's daughter.

Nero.—Well, are you to be married at last?

Cin.—Why not?

Rin.—Bravo, Cinthio! I am quite pleased with your account of yourself.

Cin.—But my dear girl is still more so; we have already formed our plan of life. Her father knows of our attachment, will give up his place to me, and remove hither, where he will pass the remainder of his days witnessing the happiness of his only child.

Rin.—Let me embrace you. Take her, my friend, and make her happy. What is her name?

Cin.—Eugenia!

Rin.—Fill our glasses. Let us drink her health, or yours and hers together, and may you enjoy all the happiness conjugal affection can confer.

Nero.—I drink it with all my heart; but I can scarcely believe it.

Rin.—May I be happy like you, my brave fellow!

Cin.—I have often thought of you; I have bewailed you as a friend that is dead; but I cherished the remembrance, and even loved your ashes as myself.

Rin.—Now, then, you will acknowledge I was right.

Cin.—Yes, yes; besides, you are with me, and my joy is complete.

Eugenia now unexpectedly arrived, and was astonished to find so many strangers with her lover, who introduced them to her as his friends. Eugenia, however, seemed to take no particular interest in them, and appeared much embarrassed, which Cinthio perceiving, encouraged her to speak.

Cin.—You need not fear my visitors; I have already told you they are my friends, and you have no secrets, I suppose?

Eug.—No secrets; but—I am in great trouble.

Cin.—So you appear. But what is the matter?—on what account?

Eug.—On your account.

Cin.—On my account! What danger threatens me?

Eug.—Ah! one cannot know——

Cin.—Speak! Would you make me uneasy also?

Eug.—Ah, no! But hear me—hear the news I bring.

Cin.—News! What?

Eug.—You have heard of the great robber, Rinaldini!

Cin.—Oh yes, frequently.

Eug.—He is here in the neighbourhood.

Cin.—Indeed!

Eug.—Yes, in the neighbourhood.

Cin.—Impossible!

Eug.—No, no; it is true. He must be a very fearful man! The militia have attacked his band, and are still fighting with them. Our soldiers, too, are sent out, and even the horse. My father thought you would probably go out against the robbers instead of him. I know you will do it, and this it is that makes me so uneasy. God knows what may happen! Perhaps you will be brought back a corpse, and I am sure I cannot survive you.

Cin.—Then you would rather that your father would go himself?

Eug.—Certainly.

Cin.—Poor old man! Suppose he were brought back a corpse——

Eug.—Ah, heavens! it would break my heart. Still I should have you. But were you killed—my father is old, and——

Cin.—You would more easily get another lover than another father.

Eug.—That is true.

Cin.—Is it not?

Eug.—But not another Cinthio.

Cin.—I thank you, my dear Eugenia, for your kindness; but what is to be done?

Eug.—Oh, that hateful, that accursed Rinaldini!

Cin.—He is said to be a very handsome man.

Eug.—Alas! as for me, I should think him a thousand times handsomer were he hanging between heaven and earth.

Rin.—I will make you a proposal; instead of Cinthio, let me go out against this Rinaldini, and I will bring him to your wedding as a marriage present.

Eug.—Catch him if you can, you will get plenty of money for him. But you may take it all; I want none of it. If I can but keep my Cinthio prisoner, I have all I want.

Cin.—Oh, my dear girl!

Rin.—An excellent bride.

Eug.—Cinthio, let your friend take your place, since he is so willing.

Cin.—Then he will get your father's office.

Eug.—With all my heart.

Cin.—And then how shall we live?

Eug.—We must do as well as we can; if we do but save both our lives, that is all I care for.

Cin.—And what will people think and say of me? they will call me a coward; would you have such a wretch for your husband?

Eug.—Truly, that would be very sad; what must be done?

Cin.—I must go.

Eug.—Oh, I would rather die a thousand times.

Cin.—But what will you say, if I tell you I am proof against both steel and bullets?

Eug.—I should bid you go.

Cin.—Ask my guests.

Eug.—Is it true?

Rin.—I know nothing to the contrary. He would have been dead long ago, if it were not.

—*Ah, heavens!* oh that it were true!

Cin.—Be at rest; you will certainly see me return as sound and hearty as I am now.

A musket was now heard in front of the house, upon which they all started. Eugenia cried, "Holy Virgin! my heart whispers that Rinaldini is here!" Thus saying, she sank upon a chair, and Cinthio and his friends seized their arms.

All now was silent; and Eugenia having recovered her wandering senses, Cinthio came to the door, followed by the rest of the company; but they could neither hear nor see any man; and though they went round the house, no signs of any human being anywhere appeared. As they were re-entering the house, however, they heard some voices at a distance; but these soon ceased, and all again was silent.

Cinthia sent Eugenia back to her father, with a message that he would go out for him against Rinaldini; upon which Eugenia left him, apparently very uneasy; and Cinthio remained with his guests.

Nero was now sent out to the ruined castle, but he sought in vain for Ludovico; till at length, at the approach of night, he came back without any intelligence whatever.

After an almost sleepless night, Rinaldo himself repaired to the ruined castle, where he ascended the platform, and anxiously looked around towards the happy spot in which were centered all his thoughts and wishes.

The sun arose in all the splendid majesty of light, and began to illumine all the mountains; the pinnacles and crosses that adorned the towers of the castle, already shone with the ruddy morning rays, and upon these Rinaldo fixed his eyes, till the mist cleared away, and the valley became more visible. The sun now glided through the blue ether unobscured, the woods and vales seemed awakened to greet the new-born day, and innumerable warblers poured forth their songs of joy. But Rinaldo inclined his head, and fell upon his knee, overpowered with the contending sensations of hope and fear, of transport and despair.

"Whence—ah, whence," cried he, "these strange emotions? What is it I feel? What thus sinks me to the earth, and fills my heart with sadness? Thy pure rays, alas! thou light of worlds, pierce the inmost recesses of my soul. Oh! annihilate me, and let me here expire in the act of adoration."

After a long pause he raised his eyes towards heaven, and sighed, while, with tears streaming from his eyes, he exclaimed, "Unhappy wretch! here I wander in wildernesses and solitudes, fearing every man I meet, and shunning the very light of day. All my dreams are past, and the dreadful hand of truth holds me in brazen fetters. Oh, Rinaldo! what will be thy end?"

He now heard footsteps in the forest, and started up. Some firing succeeded, upon which he seized his musket, and looking down, perceived Terlini and his comrades, who were flying towards the ruins, pursued by several soldiers. Having reached the castle, they came to close quarters, and Rinaldo's prudence forsaking him, he fired upon the soldiers, who now increased in numbers; and Terlini and his companions being cut to pieces, Rinaldo was surrounded and hemmed in by six men, to whom he was obliged to surrender.

"I'm a dead man," cried one of the soldiers, "if this fellow is not Rinaldini himself."

Upon this, an officer inquired, "Are you Rinaldi?" and Rinaldo, scarcely knowing what he said, sighed out, "Alas! I am."

A great cry of joy now arose, and they bound their prisoner's hands, and put fetters on his feet. At length they began their march toward the borders of the forest, during which the soldiers were riotous and joyful; but Rinaldo scarcely once raised his eyes from the earth.

They encamped that night on an extensive plain that bounded the forest. Here the officer ordered some bread and wine to be given to Rinaldo, but he partook of neither.

"You had not the courage," said the officer, "to kill yourself. In your place, I would certainly have done it, for how ignominious is the death that now awaits you!"

To this Rinaldo made no reply, and the soldiers exclaimed, "The fellow is sullen."

"Ah," said another, "he will soon find his tongue when he is put upon the rack."

At this word Rinaldo shuddered, and a violent emotion convulsed his whole frame, yet not sufficiently powerful to break his bands. He asked for a cloak, which was given him, and having caused it to be thrown over him, he concealed his face, while tears streamed upon the grass.

"At length," thought he, "the hour of my dissolution is come, and the transient misery

of life is over, like the passing shadow of a camera obscura. Farewell, Rinaldo; thy dreams are dreams indeed! Thou art in bondage, and Corsica still groans in chains. Away with me to the scaffold; such is thy triumphal arch, and the end of all my brilliant actions."

A few hours after, they proceeded on their march, and Rinaldo, complaining of fatigue, he was placed on a straw waggon, which was strongly escorted. Thus he arrived, towards evening, at Sardona, where he was to be delivered into the hands of justice, and the following day to be conveyed to Messina. At midnight, the door of his prison was opened, the light of a wax candle darted into his prison, and, to his utter astonishment, the old man of Fronteja entered.

Rin.—Heavens! what do I see?

Old Man.—Your friend.

Rin.—Are you really the wise man of Fronteja?

Old Man.—I am.

Rin.—How came you here?

Old Man.—By the power I possess.

Rin.—Have you power to break chains?

Old Man.—I have.

Rin.—Then break mine.

Old Man.—Upon conditions. Why should I not?

Rin.—Upon conditions? What do you mean?

Old Man.—I am not wholly disinterested.

Rin.—Then you are like the rest of the world.

Old Man.—Not so much as you may imagine; my motives justify me.

Rin.—How much do you demand for my liberation?

Old Man.—Much and little, as it may be taken.

Rin.—Speak.

Old Man.—You must give yourself up wholly to me and my commands.

Rin.—That is much indeed.

Old Man.—I will save you from the rack and the gallows.

Rin.—That, too, is much.

Old Man.—'Tis unequalled. Without my assistance you are lost. Do you still deliberate?

Rin.—No; for I will rather give myself up to the crows and worms.

Old Man.—You know not your own true interest.

Rin.—Since it becomes not a philosopher to be compassionate to an unfortunate like me, tell me for what object you require me to give myself up to you and your commands.

Old Man.—I stipulate for no particular cases; we are treating generally, and in all cases. Give yourself up to me unconditionally, and I will rescue you from prison and from death.

Rin.—I am no machine. Good night.

Old Man.—What ill-timed pride! You have been nothing but a machine ever since you began your celebrated career.

Rin.—What say you?

Old Man.—You have, and that without knowing it.

Rin.—Indeed!

Old Man.—Yes, a machine, and my machine! You behold me with wonder! I repeat it—you were my machine, are so still, and will continue so as long as I please. On me and my plans depend your destruction or salvation. 'Tis true your misfortunes were not my work; but I always knew how to save you, however frequently you would yourself have run into destruction.

Rin.—I must not, cannot serve you more. What is past, has happened without my knowledge or consent. Now I will be free, and, if it must be, will freely die.

Old Man.—Even that you cannot do: you will be tried before a criminal tribunal, and there you cannot act from your own will.

Rin.—I can strangle myself, or hold my breath till I die.

Old Man.—An expedient which many have tried, but has succeeded with few; meanwhile, you may try it. Good night.

Rin.—One question more.

Old Man.—What is it?

Rin.—If I have been your machine, am so still, and must still continue so if you choose, why do you require of me an express devotion to your commands? Why do you need this, if I am already in your power, and am the plaything of your caprice?

Old Man.—Be assured that was unavoidable, otherwise it would not have been; besides, you may easily imagine I am not much more simple than yourself.

Rin.—I have never doubted your wisdom, though I have the object of your errand; nor can I deny I suspect the boasted greatness of your power.

Old Man.—Of that you may think as you please; but how, then, do you imagine I have found my way hither through your guards, and through locks and bolts?

Rin.—Certainly not by witchcraft.

Old Man.—That I have not said. But why so many words?—You will soon be carried in a cart to Messina, where your arrival will afford sport to the people, and much pleasure to your acquaintance there. I doubt not a certain Dianora——

Rin.—Silence, barbarian! You stretch me on the rack, without either law or justice. Take me from this dungeon; but——

Old Man.—You know the condition.

Rin.—No, I will rather die.

Thus saying, he turned towards the wall; the old man went away, and the door closed

The next day Rinaldo was taken from his prison, to be carried forward on his journey. Meanwhile an officer of militia delivered him a paper, which he requested Rinaldo, as soon as he had read it, to return. It was to the following effect:—"You have stood the test. Doubt not the assistance of your friend."

Rinaldo returned the paper, and was placed in a carriage, under a strong escort. They travelled the whole day without stopping, and at sunset entered into a narrow vale, of which they had scarcely reached the middle, when some shots were fired on Rinaldo's escort from a small distance, on the neighbouring hills; and soon after some men appeared, who fell on the militia with a wild outcry. They fought with fury, and this narrow valley seemed full of combatants. Shot followed shot, and sabres clashed against sabres, till at length the soldiers were driven off from the carriage, the mules were made to advance as fast as possible, and presently some of the party sprang up and unbound Rinaldo's bands. Two horsemen brought him a led horse, which they desired him to mount, and they instantly set off together in a hard trot.

They advanced up the side of the mountain, while the moon rose and illumined the rugged paths, but without uttering a word, till they came to a place overgrown with brambles, where the horsemen stopped, desired Rinaldo to dismount, gave him a portmanteau, took his horse by the bridle, and, without saying a word, galloped off.

In vain did Rinaldo call after them; they made no answer, and were presently out of sight. The sound of their horses' feet was soon imperceptible, and Rinaldo remained in an unknown place alone. He now began to reflect on this singular adventure, convinced he owed his preservation to the old man of Fronteja; and, taking the portmanteau under his arm, began to travel onward.

When he had advanced some way, he perceived a light, and hastening toward it, came to the lonely habitation of a hermit, who came out to him with a lantern.

"Are you there?" cried he, holding the light to him; "I was just coming to meet you."

"Do you know me then?" said Rinaldo.

"Have you forgotten the old man of Fronteja?" replied the latter. "Come and pass the night with me; then you will perceive that I know you."

Rinaldo entered the hermitage, when he found a frugal repast and a good bed. No conversation, however, passed between him and his host, and Rinaldo went to sleep, somewhat fatigued.

When he awoke, he beheld the theosophist of Fronteja by the side of his bed, reading a book.

Old Man.—You have reposed long; and, I hope, slept well; better than in your last night's lodging.

Rin.—Where am I?

Old Man.—Among friends, with whom you will stay till you can travel further without danger.

Rin.—And whither?

Old Man.—That must be the subject of deliberation; you have had such a proof of my power and of my friendship as your fortitude deserved. You are free and unrestrained; act as prudence and inclination may direct; and if you wish for good counsel it shall not be wanting, but it shall not be forced on you. It may, perhaps, be requisite you should stay here a fortnight, before you can pursue your route without danger, and, therefore, some society has been provided for you in your solitude.

As he said this he left the room, when immediately Olympia entered, and hurried toward Rinaldo with extended arms; but Rinaldo beheld her in silence.

Olym.—Will you say nothing to your Olympia? Have you no pleasure in again meeting a friend, who for you has voluntarily banished herself to a desert.

Rin.—I admire whatever you do.

Olym.—With admiration alone, such a friend as I is not satisfied; I have a right to expect more from you. You are rescued, and in a place of safety, and you have not even thanks to bestow on your friends.

Rin.—I thank you with my whole heart for my rescue, but does Luigino live?

Olym.—He does.

Rin.—Where?

Olym.—That I do not yet know.

Rin.—Where is Rosalia?

Olym.—Probably with Luigino.

Rin.—Probably?

Olym.—I have no certain knowledge; if she is no longer with Luigino, he must certainly have sent her to the old man of Fronteja.

Rin.—Are, then, Luigino and the old man acquainted?

Olym.—Why not? the old man knows us all.

Rin.—But do we know him?

Olym.—At least personally.

Rin.—Is he still here?

Olym.—No; he went as I came in. He knows you are in good hands.

Rin.—Whence this interest he takes in the fate of a man who is persecuted by all the rest of mankind?

Olym.—For that very reason—because they persecute him.

Rin.—That is not the only reason.

Olym.—Be it so or not, what is that to us?—'tis enough that we are under his powerful protection.

Rin.—Is he really powerful?

Olym.—Did you not experience that yesterday?—without his assistance you had been lost.

Rin.—Life is hateful to me.

Olym.—It will be otherwise.

Rin.—Condemned ever to wander in solitudes and forests—to fly mankind—to fear every human being, and to hate myself—my very existence is a burden to me.

Olym.—Is Sicily the whole world? In the fruitful vales of Corsica——

Rin.—What hopes dost thou recal to my mind!

Olym.—That which you must not abandon.

Rin.—Oh, that dream!

Olym.—Must be realized. In you I embrace the deliverer of Corsica.

Rin.—I am not its deliverer yet.

Olym.—You must—you will be its deliverer. Luigino depends upon your promise; we all desire it; all your friends who know you, and those who are your friends without knowing you, reckon upon you as well as we.

Rin.—Beware, lest you reckon without your host.

Olym.—Oh, no. Learn, too, that your powerful protector, the old man of Fronteja, *reckons upon you*: he is our host; he is a Corsican.

Rin.—Indeed!

Olym.—Yes; he is a Corsican, as well as Luigino. Your Olympia, too, is a Corsican.

Rin.—At Naples she was a Genoese.

Olym.—The times are altered; now I am what I really am, a Corsican, and your most tender friend. I do homage to you as the deliverer of my country, and as the sole possessor of my heart. But I must go and attend to our little household concerns, which call for my presence, for we must not die of hunger.

Rinaldo was now alone, and began to reflect on what had passed.—"Thus," thought he to himself, "I have at length discovered that, amidst all my fancied independence, I am but a tool of the real or pretended plans of an artful man. But, patience! Even he shall learn what I really am. And yet, what can I do? Is not the part he would make me play sufficiently honourable? Death is certain; and is it not better to fall in the field of battle than on the scaffold?"

Olympia interrupted this soliloquy by bringing in an excellent breakfast, concerning which she seemed very busy, and appeared as though she were born to be a housewife. Rinaldo made a remark to that effect, at which she laughed, but gave no other answer than—"Much good may it do you," and went out.

Rinaldo left his bed, dressed himself, and took a hearty breakfast. Olympia soon returned and kept him company; but she spoke only of household affairs, and that with so much minuteness, that Rinaldo himself was astonished at her being so well acquainted with that kind of business, of which he had imagined her to be wholly ignorant. He endeavoured, however, to turn the conversation to the subject of which she had spoken before; but she only repeated what she had already said, and observing she must prepare for dinner, was about to leave the room. Rinaldo, however, detained her, and asked whether the noble Corsican was to be nothing better than Rinaldo's cook?

Olym.—Pardon me; much more. She wishes to be everything to the deliverer of her country—and that includes both cook and housekeeper. Princesses have set me the example, and I am not ashamed of any labour I perform from such honourable motives. When the name of Rinaldo is engraved on marble, I will write the name of his cook with charcoal underneath, and add—"She supplied him with food, that he might become to her native country that which he proved—her deliverer." 'Tis true, your name will be more durable than mine in the temple of fame, but I will renew it as often as the rain obliterates it; and should my tears fall upon the earth that covers thy ashes, I will pray to heaven—"Oh, give him whom I deplore not these tears alone with which I water his grave, but give him my whole self, as I have given myself to him when alive."

Rin.—Olympia, these flattering words are——

Olym.—Oh, speak it not. What I feel must be answered by feelings, and not by words.

Rin.—Dreams leave no feelings behind them.

Olym.—But the remembrance——

Rin.—Beyond the grave?

Olym.—I hope so.

Rin.—And are you certain mine will be in the vales of Corsica?

Olym.—Where'er it be, oh, be it as late as possible; and, if it may be, near mine; for I will never leave you more till fate shall tear me from you. My existence is connected with yours by a powerful chain; I can die, but cannot leave you.

Rin.—Do you think Rosalia is with the old man of Fronteja?

Olym.—In safety she certainly is, and in your heart also: nor can I ever drive her thence. All I ask is, the second place there; that next hers; my request is at least as just as my affection is true and tender. She is no Corsican, and my heart is enfolded in my love for my country. Will you unfold it? I will not resist; no veil shall conceal it from you. Behold, and find it such as it is.

As she said this, she reclined her head upon his bosom, and throwing her arms around him, the big drops rolled down her beauteous cheeks; they uttered not a word; she pressed Rinaldo ardently to her bosom, then tore herself away.

"Alas!" said Rinaldo with a sigh, as he communed with himself, "so it is; I am destined

to be the sport of an old juggler, and of an artful woman. 'Tis all concerted between them. We shall soon see, however, how to act."

He now went out, and took a view of the wild but confined scenery that surrounded him. Meanwhile Olympia was very busy in the kitchen, and sang as she worked in broken stanzas, and with frequent pauses. This awakened Rinaldo's fondness for music, and finding a guitar, which was his favourite instrument, he seated himself before the door, and sang a mournful song he had composed on his wretched prospects and condition.

Meanwhile Olympia came out, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, "Rinaldo," said she, "sing such songs no more, or I shall die. Cruel man, wherefore this self-torment?"

"'Tis my song of repentance," replied Rinaldo.

"No," rejoined she, "'tis your destruction. It robs you of your courage and your fortitude, and changes you to a coward. In a moment of danger you would lose your presence of mind, and be subdued by your sorrows, ere the enemy attacked you. With such feelings you can never lead the Corsicans to victory; thus, self-subdued, you will never fight the fight of heroes."

"All I wish," said Rinaldo, with a deep sigh, "is an honourable death."

"Alas! my wretched country!" exclaimed Olympia, and hurried from him.

He continued for a while lost in reflection; but at length arose, and taking his guitar, climbed a hill, where he reclined beneath an aged pine; when casting his eyes over the prospect, he perceived a man ascending the hill, and at length approaching the hermitage, which he entered, and immediately Olympia came to the door and called Rinaldo, who found, on his arrival, a messenger with the following letter:—

"Your friends rejoice in your escape, and revere your deliverer. Our numbers daily increase, and we are already in treaty for some ships. We shall all meet where fame and honour, and the boldest of their countrymen, await you."

Rinaldo would have spoken with the messenger, but he was already gone. Immediately after, Olympia brought in dinner, which was a frugal, though a good repast, and accompanied with excellent wine.

Rinaldo passed three days in this solitude, wholly lost in thought, while Olympia was more disposed to observe than to disturb him. She therefore employed herself in writing letters, which Rinaldo had no curiosity to read, though they often lay open, perhaps not undesignedly, before his eyes. She even received other letters by a messenger, to whom she delivered those she had written, yet Rinaldo did not say a single word to the bearer.

Towards evening, on the fourth day, as they were sitting before the door, in perfect silence, like husband and wife after a quarrel, a man came from the valley toward their dwelling. He was a handsome youth, and walking boldly up to them, addressed them in these words:—"Peace be with you, in the name of the old man of Fronteja! I am one of his young people."

As he said this, he delivered a letter to Olympia; and while she read it, Rinaldo inquired, "How is your master?"

"As he is always," returned the stranger, "well, and anxious for the welfare of his friends."

When Olympia had read her letter, the youth complained of hunger, thirst, and fatigue; upon which Olympia brought out some refreshments, and prepared him a bed for the night.

Rinaldo was still sitting at the door, and had lost himself in contemplating the firmament, when Olympia returned, and thus addressed him:—

"I have received intelligence that some friends from Corsica are arrived, and are with our friend at Fronteja. They are burning with desire to become acquainted with you, and will visit us a few days hence. I have the more pleasure in telling you this, as my brother is among these Corsicans, and will also pay us a visit. Luigino has strengthened his party, and has taken an advantageous position. Within three weeks four large ships will be ready for us, and everything succeeds to our wishes. The ever-brave Rinaldo alone is not as he ought to be. He holds back from the great enterprise, and is lost in himself.

Rin.—When a proper occasion offers he will be as he ought to be again.

Olym.—Oh that we could but hope! Rosalia is at Fronteja——

Rin.—Is she there?

Olym.—Shall I write that you wish to see her here?

Rin.—Yes.

Olym.—I will do it.

Rin.—Indeed!

Olym.—Why should I not? Perhaps, or rather most certainly, her company will make you gayer than mine; and so we shall all be gainers. With the return of your cheerfulness, your bold enterprising spirit will be awakened, though your low spirits have laid it asleep. Yes. Rosalia's presence will awaken it; she shall stay with you here, and I will go to Fronteja.

Rin.—And why?

Olym.—You would not wish me to stay when Rosalia is with you? No, Rinaldo; my heart is not so devoid of feeling as to bear the presence of a successful rival without jealousy. My absence will at least preserve your friendship, and I will strive to conquer my passion for you.

Rinaldo made no reply, and Olympia lighted a candle, wished him good night, and left him. Rinaldo now paced to and fro before the house, then entered the room, came out again into the open air, and continued till midnight almost in a waking dream. At length suddenly starting up, he took a light, and hurried, unknowing what he did, to Olympia's apartment, which he softly entered, and saw her in the arms of the youth sent from the old man of Fronteja.

He returned equally unperceived; and at daybreak, before the youthful paramours were up, Rinaldo took his musket on his shoulder, and with hasty step quitted his abode.

Toward noon he reached a village, where he rested awhile, and then proceeded on his journey.

The shadows now began to lengthen, the sun approached the horizon, and he doubled his pace, to reach a castle that appeared in view before night. This he accomplished, and knocking at the door, found admission.

"Who are you?" said the porter.

"I am Baron Tegnano," replied Rinaldo, "and have lost my way while I was out shooting."

The porter made no reply, but fixed his eyes on Rinaldo, who asked, "To whom does this castle belong?"

"To the Countess Martagno."

"To the Countess Martagno!" said Rinaldo, hastily; "is she here?"

"No, she is not here," replied the porter.

"Who lives in the castle?"

"A female friend of the countess, Madonna Violanta."

"Madonna Violanta! I know her, and she knows me."

As she said this, he hastily entered the castle, and went up stairs, where he met with a maid servant, whom he desired to announce Baron Tegnano to her mistress; but the slowness of the maid not satisfying him, he passed her and entered an ante-chamber.

On hearing the sound of his footsteps, some one opened a chamber door, and he was met by Signora Violanta.

Vio.—Heavens! Baron Tegnano! am I really not mistaken?"

Rin.—You are not, good Violanta.

Vio.—Heavens! how came you here?

Rin.—In consequence of wanting a night's lodging.

Violanta was silent, but fixed her eyes on him, then returned into the chamber. Rinaldo followed her. She threw herself on a sofa, and exclaimed, in broken words, "Oh, let me recover my wandering senses!"

Rinaldo now cast his eyes around the room, and beheld the portrait of the countess hanging on the wall. "Is Dianora here?" exclaimed he; "ah, no! 'tis, alas! but her resemblance." Thus saying, he hurried to the picture, took it from the wall, and kissed it with ardour. Violanta beheld him in silence; while he, lost in the contemplation of the beloved object, remarked not the impression his conduct made on the observant Violanta. After a long pause, he approached her, seized her hand, and asked, "Where is Dianora? is Dianora happy?"

Violanta sighed, and was silent; but Rinaldo, with increasing vehemence, repeated, "Where is Dianora?" where is my beloved Dianora?"

Violanta cast her eyes upon the ground.

Rin.—Is she dead?

Vio.—She lives.

Rin.—She lives! she lives! and well and happy!

Vio.—Ah, baron! how can you ask?

Rin.—I understand you; my misfortunes are hers. And how could it be otherwise? You know already—you know who I am?

Vio.—I have often seen you, baron, and——

Rin.—Ah, call me by my true name! I will not blush.

Vio.—By your true name! Is it not Tegnano?

Rin.—What! know you not? has not the countess told you——

Vio.—Told me what?

Rin.—Declare sincerely all you know of me.

Vio.—That you are more loved than you ought to be; that you have been false, and—— but I am silent. If your conscience does not reproach you——

Rin.—Violanta! I have saved you from the dreadful shades of death, and have a right to your gratitude; may I reckon upon it?

Vio.—You may.

Rin.—Then, I conjure you, tell me truly how much has the countess told you?

Vio.—I know she loves you, and that you have forsaken her.

Rin.—Oh heavens!

Vio.—Your departure brought her almost to death's door; she had a dreadful illness, and the name of unfortunate mother ceased ere it existed.

Rin.—Where is she? where does she live?

Violanta was silent, but beheld him with a wistful eye. Rinaldo, who, from her manner, concluded that she knew not where the countess was, and that the latter had concealed his true name from her, perhaps to spare herself the shame a discovery of it would have brought upon her, now became bolder, and employed all his eloquence to induce her to declare to him where the countess was, but in vain. Violanta eluded all his questions, or parried them by other questions which might lead him from the subject. In this, however, she could not succeed.

While they were yet speaking, a bell, which hung in Violanta's chamber, was vehemently pulled, on which she started up, took a key and a light, and would have left the room. Rinaldo, however, detained her.

Rin.—Whither are you going?

Vio.—That I must not tell you.

Rin.—Whither does that bell call you? Ah! doubtless to Dianora.

Vio.—What then do you imagine——

Rin.—That she is here.

Vio.—You are mistaken.

Rin.—No, no; my heart assures me she is here. You are going to her. Oh! tell her I am here; that—no, I will go with you; I will follow you; I must see her.

Vio.—The sudden alarm would kill her.

Rin.—Ha! you have betrayed yourself. She is here then? Come, let us go to her.

Vio.—By all the saints of heaven! no.

Rin.—She is here.

Vio.—Yes, the secret is out; she is. But you must not see her. She lives in silence and alone, as a penitent. The sight of you would destroy her.

Rin.—Oh, Violanta! if ever you loved, oh let me but see her.

Vio.—I must not, cannot hazard it. Her health is ruined, her nerves are weak and relaxed, and your presence would strike her to the earth.

Rin.—Can I not see her unseen myself? I will not speak to her, if it must not be. Oh, she is so dear to me! Her life is dearer to me than my own.

The bell rang again louder and quicker.

Vio.—Oh, heavens! Something may have happened to her. Detain me not!

Rin.—I must see her.

Vio.—Resistless man! follow me, but conceal yourself, and speak not a single word:

Violanta now led the way; and Rinaldo followed her along a gallery into a room, where she placed him at a niche, and left him.

Here Rinaldo beheld a room entirely hung with black; and a table, on which were a crucifix, a death's head, and two lighted wax tapers, which but feebly illumined the darkness of the room. Pale and emaciated, a female figure, clothed in black, walked to and fro. Rinaldo perceived it was Dianora. Tears stole from his eyes, his lips trembled, his hands shook, and his feet almost refused to support him.

Violante entered the chamber, and approached Dianora. Meanwhile Rinaldo listened to what passed.

"Ah! where have you been staying?" said she, reclining her head on Violanta's shoulder. "I have been slumbering, and had a dreadful dream. Methought he was here; the traitor approached me, and covered my face with his bloody hand. The blood ran from his hand upon my bosom and my clothes, and burnt like fire through all my members. The fright waked me, and I thanked the holy Virgin that it was but a dream. But this dream has taken a strong effect upon me. Ah, that I may never see that unfortunate man again!"

Vio.—Never?

Dia.—Never; neither waking nor in my dreams.

Vio.—Did you not lately say you received certain intelligence of his death?

Dia.—'Tis true, and I believed it; and it would be well if it were so.

Vio.—If you do not wish to see him again, believe it. But that is not so.

Dia.—Oh yes! both for my sake and for his.

Vio.—And for his?

Dia.—Yes, and far more than my own; for the unfortunate man is a traitor, and traitors deserve death, and he has long deserved it. He has betrayed me, and his name is—ah, let us speak no more of him. It was but a dream. He is still far away; he will never return.

Vio.—But if——

Dia.—No, no; he dares not return; nor could I dare to hold any communication with him, for he is a traitor.

Vio.—But should his repentance——

Dia.—His repentance can never uncommit his crime. He is a great, a dreadful criminal.

Vio.—Oh, fear him not. Perhaps he loves you still.

Dia.—But I dare not love him. Oh, Violanta! if you did but know—but enough! no more of him!

Dianora now seated herself upon a sofa, and Violanta sat down beside her. After a long pause, Dianora asked, "Have you nothing new to tell me from the great world?"

Vio.—Yes; something that has happened very near us—in the castle itself.

Dia.—What is it?

Vio.—We have a stranger here, who has begged a night's lodging.

Dia.—But he does not know I am here?

Vio.—No; we granted his request in consequence of his noble appearance.

Dia.—And know you not who he is?

Vio.—He has not yet told us his name.

Dia.—Beware what you do; you know there are robbers about.

Vio.—He has no appearance of a robber.

Dia.—Appearances are deceitful. Yes, Violanta, appearances are very deceitful. Never judge too rashly of the heart by the face. I myself once—robbers may disguise themselves, assume names and titles, and—be upon your guard. Even the dreadful Rinaldini—ah, heavens! should he——

Vio.—What ails you?

Dia.—My eyes—ah, my head——

Vio.—My dear countess!

Dia.—Peace! 'tis past—a dizziness—but 'tis gone. Ah, the dream! the dream! put me to bed.

Violanta went into an inner chamber, and Rinaldo returned along the gallery to that o Violanta, where he threw himself upon the sofa, and gave loose to his tears.

to himself, "whose machine I am, as he has already told me himself. No; I will not come; and if that raven of misfortune appear again, I——"

Here the black figure again stood before him and said, "What then will you do?"

Immediately Rinaldo seized his musket, cocked it, took aim, and fired at him; but his piece missed fire, and flashed in the pan.

The black figure laughed and said, "Poor marksman! fire at the crows, not at me. Attempt it a second time, and I will crush you to atoms."

"Wilt thou?" cried Rinaldo, raging, and beside himself; then threw down his musket, rushed upon him, struck him in the breast, and instantly, felt himself seized with gigantic arms, and thrown upon the ground so violently as to take away his senses.

When he came to himself, he found his head bleeding, and the black figure had disappeared. His rage deprived him of speech. He started up, took his musket, and hurried with rapid steps away.

He had scarcely gone thirty paces, when he perceived by the road-side, behind some bushes, a poor, miserable, ragged figure, who, the moment he saw him, cried out with all his might, "Ah! my dear, good, noble captain!"

Rinaldo started, and approaching him, perceived it was his faithful Ludovico, who instantly endeavoured to rise, while tears of joy flowed down his cheeks.

Rin.—Heavens! Ludovico, how you look!

Lud.—Dreadfully, I know.

Rin.—How came you into this wretched condition? You look horribly.

Lud.—I am not only miserable and ragged, but my whole body is bruised and torn to pieces.

Rin.—Speak! what has happened to you?

Lud.—When you sent me into yonder wood to reconnoitre round about the castle of the Countess Martagno, I was proceeding with the utmost prudence, and learnt that the countess was not there, but in another castle, which was described to me, and to which I immediately set off. I presently reached it, and was scarcely a hundred paces from it, when suddenly—the devil knows how he came!—a black man in a mask stood before me.

Rin.—How!

Lud.—As I tell you. He summoned me, in a commanding tone, before the tribunal of the strong judge of truth in secret. I laughed at him, and as he was rough with me, I gave him a box on the ear. But for this I paid dearly; for the fellow attacked me with the strength of a giant, knocked me down like a sparrow, and buffetted me on all sides till I became almost senseless. He then threw me like a bird or a rabbit over his shoulder, and dragged me to a chapel, before which he threw me down like a wallet. The door of the chapel immediately opened; two fellows in black came out, dragged me in by the legs, and threw me into a dark room. There I lay two days on a handful of straw, with no food but bread and water, and of that very sparingly. At length I was taken out, and carried before three men in masks, who sat round a table covered with black, and surrounded by human skeletons. They called themselves my judges, and told me I was a villain and a robber, and so forth. I thought it wisest to hold my tongue. At length they said I had already too long deserved a halter; that they would not hang me for my past crimes, but that I should be condemned to a general penance. With this sentence I was taken away, and stripped by four executioners, who flogged me till I was covered with blood. This was repeated every day; and the rascals laid on so unmercifully, that their lashes almost went to my bones. At length there was no more flesh for them to cut; so this morning they turned me out of the chapel. I have crawled hither, but can crawl no farther.

Rin.—How! And this penance I too was to have undergone?

Lud.—You! God protect you and all men from it!

Here Rinaldo related to him what had happened to himself, and Ludovico crossed himself with wonder, till Rinaldo at length exclaimed, "Come, and let us set their nest on fire."

He had scarcely uttered these words, when the black magician stood before him, and thundered out to him, "Wretched worm! have you not yet sufficiently experienced the strength of my arm? Must I totally annihilate you?"

Rinaldo rushed upon him like a madman with his poniard, but the black man eluded him.

Rinaldo collected all his strength, seized him with his left hand, and with his right struck his poniard at his breast. The stroke gave a hollow sound, and Rinaldo perceived he had struck upon a breastplate. He struck again and pierced his arm. The black man bellowed aloud, tore himself from him with gigantic strength, pushed Rinaldo back so artfully that he fell, and then with rapid step took to flight.

"Death and damnation!" cried Ludovico, "what will become of us, if that sorcerer brings his party out against us? They will beat all our bones to a jelly."

Meanwhile they heard the tinkling of bells, and saw half a dozen muleteers coming down the hill, with about thirty unloaded mules to fetch salt from Saldona. When they approached Rinaldo accosted them, and pointing to Ludovico, asked if they would not let that poor fellow, who had been maltreated by robbers, ride on one of their mules, and he would pay them himself.

"If you will pay for him, the man may ride," said the chief of the party; "but he might also ride if he did not pay, for we are Christians and not heathens. Those rascals of Rinaldini's band make a great number of unfortunates. We have given assistance to a great many more who lay upon the road, plundered, naked, and half murdered."

Ludovico, who was now very happy to find himself so strongly escorted, was tied on a mule, after which the cavalcade proceeded, and Rinaldo continued conversing with his new companions.

Rin.—You talk of Rinaldini's band—is it not entirely exterminated?

Muleteer.—By no means. What is cutting a couple of dozen of such fellows to pieces? They grow up like mushrooms.

Rin.—Is not Rinaldini himself long ago shot dead?

Mul.—Ay, that is the common cry; but it is not true. Nor will he be so soon taken.

Rin.—Why not?

Mul.—Humph! can't you guess? He has a charm, that is certain. He is proof against both lead and steel, and some say he can make himself invisible; that, however, I will not assert, but it is certain they cannot keep him when they have him; for if he is taken, he is instantly at liberty again. He is certainly a fine bold fellow, but I would not be in his skin; for what will be the end of it? By and by the devil will come, and tell him his time is out—"there is the contract—march, come along with me," and so he will twirl him over his shoulder in a twinkling.

Rin.—You don't imagine——?

Mul.—Yes, he has certainly a contract with the devil, otherwise he would have swung, and kicked the air with his legs long ago; but after all he is a most unfortunate man. Of what use to him are all the treasures of the world, since his soul is damned? That is the most valuable of possessions. If he cannot preserve that treasure, I would not give a farthing for all the rest. To live honest and die happy is the best of fortunes; but with Rinaldini 'tis a gay life and a miserable death, which is a sad fate. He cannot sleep so peacefully on his coffers of gold as I on my pack-saddles and panniers.

Rin.—'Tis said, however, he is very benevolent.

Mul.—The deuce take his benevolence! He robs first, and then gives it away. I shall never get anything by him. God bless and save my hard-earned bread. I would not steal or deceive any man, even to the value of a farthing.

Rin.—'Tis true he pursues a miserable trade.

Mul.—He is always at hand, and comes uncalled, like crows watching for carrion. He had better have learnt some other trade, for he is no fool. Of robbers and their adventures he must know enough; and God preserve all good Christians from such knowledge!

Rin.—He himself does not steal anything.

Mul.—But he makes others steal, and that is as bad. In short, not a word can be said for him; for he is a most desperate rogue, and no one ever so boldly set justice at defiance.

Rin.—How old may he be?

Mul.—Some say he is not six and twenty, others thirty, but that is the utmost. He has long been ripe for the gallows. I should like, however, to see him once; but not to have anything to do with him as an enemy, for he has too many accomplices.

Rin.—Where is his haunt now?

Mul.—No one knows. He is like nobody—everywhere at once. Sometimes he goes about as a cavalier, lives in cities, and gallants noble ladies about; but if search is made for him, he is gone in an instant, and no one knows where. He goes about the country in fine clothes, and assumes every shape and appearance—to-day here—to-morrow there; and his band constantly surrounds him.

Ludovico now perceived upon the hill the chapel of the black men. He shuddered from head to foot, sighed deeply, and gave his master a significant look; upon which the latter turned towards it, and seeing the chapel, understood his meaning.

"That chapel," said Rinaldo, "appears a very old building."

"Oh yes," replied the muleteer, "but not a soul cares to visit it; for it is quite ruinous, and has neither picture nor altar. It is probably occupied by crows and owls, unless it may sometimes afford shelter to Signor Rinaldini and his birds of night."

Rinaldo perceived no information could be procured from his new companions relative to this place, and therefore said no more.

At length they arrived at Saldona, where Rinaldo paid generously for Ludovico's ride, and had him carried to some Jews, where he clothed him anew. He then procured him salves and plaisters from an apothecary, nor were provisions forgotten. Having slept at the siesta, and hired a chaise, they proceeded on their journey.

Meanwhile Rinaldo examined his musket, and found it uncharged; which explained the reason of its missing fire at the black man.

"They have drawn the charge," said he to himself, "at the castle, in order to maltreat me with impunity. What! can Violanta have an understanding with the black fraternity, for some object which may regard the countess? or would Ludovico have been so maltreated, had he not endeavoured to find out the countess's abode? The pictures, too, in the castle, in which the black figure appeared—the skeleton in the closet—and those which Ludovico saw at the black tribunal! umph—all this may lead to various conjectures. What if Dianora herself were maltreated by a band of villains who should conspire against her and her property? Oh that I were now at the head of a score of my men, I would certainly unravel this mystery."

Near Merona, Rinaldo and Ludovico descended from their chaise, sent it back with the driver, and took a bye road, where they met two men with some mules, whom Ludovico discovered to be his old acquaintances, Luigino's band. The mutual joy of meeting was great; and they presently entered on a more particular conversation, which Rinaldo began as follows:—

Rin.—Where is Luigino?

Jordano.—All we know is, that he has divided his troops, half remaining with him, and half under the command of Amalato. We were among these last. Within six days we were alarmed, and we and ten more were cut off; since which we have never been able to join the main body. In the meanwhile, we act for ourselves in this neighbourhood.

Rin.—Have you a safe place to harbour in?

Luzio.—Oh yes.

Jor.—Up to the ears in rocks and forests.

Rin.—I will join you.

Luzio.—How?

Jor.—Are you serious?

Rin.—As I have said.

Jor.—Thunder and lightning! 'twill procure us both fame and fortune.

They now mounted the mules, and Rinaldo joined the party, who now felt three times as strong as they really were, in consequence of having the dreaded Rinaldini at their head.

Rinaldo immediately gave his orders, sent some of his men out to recruit, and others in search of their old comrades, declaring to them all that he was meditating a grand blow. This made them proud and joyous, and *viva Rinaldini!* resounded from all the rocks.

On the fourth day, two more of Luigino's men were brought in, who had been found straggling, and who were very glad to meet with their companions. Three new recruits were also admitted and sworn, and thus Rinaldo was now nineteen strong. With these men he

wheeled to the left, up the ridge of mountains above Saldona, on whose left side stood the chapel, against which he had sworn vengeance.

Rinaldo pitched his tent in an uninhabited valley among rocks, and soon received proofs of the courage of his people, who made rich booty on all sides; thus they wanted neither money nor provisions. They also brought in two footpads, who, with great pleasure, joined the newly-established banditti.

When they had procured the ammunition they wanted, and Ludovico had recovered, Rinaldo set forward with his party, took possession of the pass of the mountain, and came at midnight to the devoted chapel. Finding the door fast, they immediately broke it open, and searched the place by torch-light; but they found nothing but vaults and caverns, and all was empty and void. The speech of the muleteer was now fulfilled, for Rinaldo took up his quarters in the chapel.

The following evening he removed into the valley below, and, at the approach of night, marched against the castle of the Countess of Martagno. When he had taken possession of all the outer doors, and was about to enter the castle with Ludovico and Jordano, some of his men told him they heard the sound of horses' feet of a considerable party of cavalry. Upon this Rinaldo drew his men together, and wheeled to the left into a wood, which he had scarcely reached, when the troops approached it. His men were on the alert, and ready to fire, the dogs were silent and upon the watch, when a number of burning torches appeared.

"'Tis strange," said Ludovico; "a detachment of cavalry never march by torch-light."

The party still approached, consisting of twelve horsemen, who surrounded a carriage drawn by mules. Some bore torches, and all were in black, and masked exactly like the black man who had maltreated Rinaldo and Ludovico.

They were now very near the wood, which Rinaldo quitted, and placed himself in the way of the cavalcade, with his gun cocked. Behind him were Ludovico, Luzio, Jordano, and two more of their companions, ready to fire, while the rest of the party enclosed them on their right flank in a semicircle.

"Halt!" said Rinaldo, with a thundering voice; "here is one who would know who you are."

"Who is he?" said the chief of the party; "who is he that dares to command us? us, whom all men fear—us, whose power is dreadful?"

"Dreadful and powerful as you may be," said Rinaldo, "I have a name to oppose to you that makes whole cities tremble, and a few leaden balls will soon put an end to your power, and the terror you excite. I am Rinaldini."

"He is not the man," replied the chief, "that can frighten us; nor is he powerful enough to threaten us with effect, since he himself is in our power."

"You lie," cried Rinaldo, with bitterness, "Rinaldini is in no man's power."

"You fool!" returned the leader, "your threats might soon be turned against youself, if you did not excite our pity; but at a proper time you shall repent of it. The lashes of the powerful ones fall heavy; of that ask Ludovico."

"I hope," cried Ludovico, "to pay stroke for stroke."

"Now," continued the black man, 'it is our turn to ask you, Rinaldini, why you place yourself in our way? What would you?"

"Satisfaction," quickly returned Rinaldo, "for unauthorized maltreatment practised toward Ludovico and myself. I care not for your pretended power. I will also know what you are thus secretly conveying in the carriage."

"Of all that," replied the black man, "I shall not say a word; we shall give no man any account of our proceedings. Abandon your design, and begin to repent, otherwise severe justice will be executed on you."

Rinaldo made no reply, but gave a signal, upon which his party hemmed in the cavalcade still closer.

"One word more," said he, "and you are dead men. Open the secrets of your carriage voluntarily and surrender, or you shall pay for your obstinacy with your lives."

"You may do as you please," replied the black man, "but I will acquaint you with your

own danger; you are surrounded. On all the heights arms are glittering to your destruction; surrender to us on discretion, or your lives are forfeited."

"Captain," whispered Jordano, "the heights seem actually full of men;" and Ludovico in their cant told him the same.

"The die is cast," replied Rinaldo; "we shall not be so easily taken; certainly not without bloodshed. Besides, the moment I give the signal, we shall cut our way through."

He now turned again to his antagonist, and asked, "For the last time, will you surrender voluntarily?"

"For the last time," replied the other, "no."

Rinaldo fired his pistol at the black leader of the party, and twenty more shot were fired by his people. Three of the black men fell, the rest drew their pistols and shot two of Rinaldo's men; then setting spurs to their horses, they galloped off.

Rinaldo approached the carriage, and raised the curtain, expecting to clasp Dianora in his arms, but instead of a human being, found a coffin.

Jordano, Ludovico, and Luzio, mounted the horses of the killed; and now on all sides trumpets were heard, and soon after the alarm-bell was rung in all the villages.

"Quick," said Rinaldo, "quick with the carriage to the mountain on the right." He then vaulted on a horse which Ludovico brought him, and galloped towards the pass, followed by Jordano and Luzio.

Ludovico and some of his companions sprang on to the carriage and within. The rest kept close together, and the whole party followed their captain as fast as possible.

Rinaldo had scarcely reached the narrow pass of the mountain, when he and his companions dismounted, and took post there, resolved to defend this retreat to the last; but no opponents appeared, and they were not attacked.

Soon after came the carriage, and, by degrees, the rest of the party, who drew off towards a more retired part of the mountain; and, by break of day, reached a small valley, when they halted. Both mules and horses were left to enjoy the miserable herbage of the valley in liberty; and Rinaldo mustered his people, of whom none were missing but the two that were killed.

Rinaldo now ordered the coffin to be taken out of the carriage. It was extraordinarily heavy, and nailed down very fast, but being forced open, proved full of gold and silver vessels, closely packed together, with plates, dishes, mugs, goblets, and jewels; and two caskets, containing rings, watches, and six rolls of a hundred ducats each.

"Aha," said Rinaldo, "now we know these gentlemen; they are of our own trade, only under a different appearance. This is the cause of their hatred towards us; 'tis envy brings them out against us. 'Tis well they have made a collection here, which we will divide like the heirs of an old usurer."

He immediately wrote down the shares of the distribution, and each had a considerable sum; he himself only kept one of the horses and two rolls of ducats; the rest of what was due to him, he gave up for half its value in money.

Thinking it probable he might be pursued, he divided his band, and pointed out to his companions the road they were to take to the right and left, in order, by degrees, to approach the place wherein he imagined Luigino might be, and whither he himself intended to go.

Everything being now in order, he mounted his horse, as did Ludovico and Jordana, as his attendants, and all three took the great road to Nisetto.

They had scarcely left the valley, when they met an armed man, who placed himself in their way; he delivered a letter to Rinaldo, who beheld him with suspicion, and gave his attendants the wink, which they understanding, dismounted, and seized the stranger, who stood firm, without the least motion or sign of fear. The letter was to the following effect:—

"Courageous Rinaldini,—Your fortitude and courage excite our admiration; you have overcome us, and from foes converted us into friends. We now solemnly offer you our hands, in an alliance which you must not refuse, for it is the offer of men who are sufficiently dreaded to make themselves respected everywhere. Tired of the yoke of a tyrannical government, we are resolved to rule ourselves. You, who deserve to be at the head of an army, will take

the office that is so well adapted to you. We would know where we may find you, that we may communicate further by word of mouth. You may confide your answer to the bearer without the least suspicion; we expect it will be conformable to our wishes.

"Your friends,

"The Black Judges in Secret."

Rinaldo tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, and with a pencil wrote—

"Rinaldini desires not to be more acquainted with you than he is already. He is no rebel against his king, and despises your offer. He will be able to punish you, and will never suffer himself to be called your friend."

He folded up the note, and silently delivered it to the messenger, who received it in like manner, and left him without uttering a word.

When he was gone, Rinaldo communicated the contents of the letter to his companions; and they were still speaking on this subject, when they saw a coach coming toward them, in which, as it approached, Rinaldo perceived, to his utter astonishment, Olympia, sitting beside a stranger, who, from the attendants, appeared to be a person of rank and condition. At the sight of Rinaldo she turned pale, but gave no signs of knowing him; and when he bowed to her, returned his salutation with great dignity and distance.

Rinaldo stopped one of the servants, who was some way behind, and asked "Who the gentleman might be?"

"The Mayor of Nisetto," said the servant.

Ludovico looked at Rinaldo, and said laconically, "So we did not choose to know yonder lady, I suppose?"

"Certainly," said Rinaldo, laughing; "otherwise we should have acted in a different manner."

"The mayor," said Ludovico, "will soon find her out; and who knows whether, when he once knows her thoroughly, he may not repent of having made her acquaintance."

"Very possibly."

"I must confess the signora falls into a great variety of hands; but suppose she were to come into the clutches of the black men, and they should inflict on her a penance for knowing us, like that I experienced. They have written the whole calendar on my back in my own blood, and it would be a pity to impress so many red-letter lines on the signora's delicate body as they have on mine. Yes, yes, if I ever forgive the villains their cruelty, I will confess myself a fool and a coward."

He was still going on with this oration, when Jordano observed that a great cloud of dust appeared before them, which seemed to arise from a body of horse. And so it proved; for at length the cloud approached, and the troops came in sight; upon which Rinaldo ordered his men to prepare their arms, and rode directly towards them.

In fact, it was a body of dragoons, that were come out against him. The officer returned his salutation with the utmost politeness, and said—"May I ask your name?"

Rinaldo answered without hesitation or delay—"I am a traveller, by birth a Roman, and my name is Baron Tegnano. These are my servants."

"Doubtless you have a passport?" said the officer.

"Oh yes," replied Rinaldo readily, "and letters of recommendation from the Mayor of Nisetto, whose relation I have the honour to be."

"That is all perfectly right," returned the officer, "otherwise you would be stopped wherever you meet any soldiers, which you will very frequently."

Rin.—How happens that? Is there any danger from the Barbaresques?

Officer.—We are too far from the coast for that; but there are a great many robbers about, and Rinaldini with his band is in the neighbourhood.

Rin.—So I have heard, but I scarcely believed it.

Offi.—'Tis true, however; and besides, there is another set of thieves; but nobody knows whether they belong to Rinaldini's band or not: they wear black monks' habits, and so make themselves much feared. I am glad to see you and your people are so well armed, otherwise I would give you an escort. Even a military body run some hazard in engaging with such a banditti, for they fight like desperadoes. You are going to Molano?

Rin.—I am.

Offi.—I wish you a pleasant journey.

Thus they took leave of each other.

Ludovico observed—"We got off very luckily. I was in a terrible fright lest he should ask to see our passports and letters of recommendation."

Jor.—So was I. And what would you have done if he had?

Lud.—Ay, let us hear what you would have done, captain.

Rin.—For that I was prepared.

Lud.—Well.

Rin.—I would have taken out my pocket-book, turned over the leaves, looked for the papers, and seemed much disturbed at not finding them.—"I have left my papers behind me," would have been my answer, and I would have proposed to go back to Nisetto to the mayor. There we should have found Olympia, and you do not imagine she would suffer any evil to befal us.

Lud.—Bravo! I should not have hit upon it so soon, and yet I flatter myself I have my share of shrewdness. You deserve indeed, were it only for this, to be our captain.

Jor.—Yes, by heavens! that is true. I am very happy I am in your service. Perhaps I shall gain by it in various ways.

They now trotted on fast; not to Molano, as Rinaldo had told the officer, but turned off to the left toward the mountains, where about noon they reached a small village. Near it was a monastery, which served as an inn for travellers, and at which they stopped.

While their frugal dinner was preparing, Rinaldo enclosed the letter he had received from the black fraternity to the Mayor of Nisetto, and sent it by a messenger, accompanied with the following letter:—

"TO THE MAYOR OF NISETTO.

"SIR,—The inclosed letter, from a black fraternity, is sent you by the man whom it invites to enter into a conspiracy against the lawful government of this island. He has no inclination to hold any communication with these men, and informs you of this set of banditti, who hide themselves in dark places. You will know what measures to take. The banished, dishonoured, and despised robber-captain is no rebel; he has renounced his way of life, and will soon be no more in this island. He wishes you all health and happiness. "RINALDO RINALDINI."

Having arranged this business, he gave himself up to the contemplation of the romantic spot before him. The inn was at the foot of a high mass of rock, on a peak of which stood a beautiful castle, surrounded with high walls, and adorned with numerous towers. It reminded him of the castle of Martagno, and recalled the remembrance of the days that were gone.

Wandering about the foot of the rock, lost in silent contemplation, he approached a bush from behind which a fellow suddenly rushed upon him, threw him down, bound him, and dragged him behind the bush. Here, upon a given signal, a trap-door, covered with turf, arose, and Rinaldo was dragged down some steps through a dark passage. A flight of steps, and another trap-door, brought him up again to daylight, and he found himself in a large court of a castle. Here his bands were loosened, and he was suffered to recover breath.

He inquired where he was, but only received for answer, that time would inform him.

On the stairs he was met by a kind of warden, who gave him three keys, saying. "These are the keys of the three apartments appointed for your residence in this castle."

Rin.—Apartments?

Warden.—Yes, apartments.

Rin.—And not dungeons?

War.—God defend us all from the dungeons of this castle; they are horrible. But why should a prison receive the noble baron?

Rin.—Do you know, then, who I am?

War.—I know nothing more of you, than that I am ordered to attend on you, and that you are a noble baron, with whose name I am unacquainted.

Rin.—In whose castle am I?

War.—That I dare not tell you.

Rin.—Through whose means am I here?

War.—I know not.'

Rin.—Tell me all the instructions you have received relative to me.

War.—To lodge you in the three rooms I have mentioned; to wait on you, and to keep you company whenever you wish it, but not otherwise; my wife is to wash and cook for you, and for the rest, I am to wait further orders.

Rin.—And may I not know the name of the proprietor of the castle?

War.—Not from me.

Rin.—Am I then a kind of state prisoner?

War.—That may be. I know not why or wherefore you are brought hither.

Rinaldo said no more, but desired to see his apartments, which were very neatly furnished. He found pen, ink, and paper, books, and even a guitar, which showed, that whoever had ordered him to be brought there, knew his mode of life.

The view from his apartment was beautifully romantic. He went to a window to enjoy it, and a telescope increased the pleasure he received.

He saw also the inn he had stopped at, and his companions, Jordano and Ludovico, who were searching about with great anxiety, and could not discover any traces of their master. He hallooed and made signs, but his voice was sent back by the rocks, and his signs were unobserved. He then wrote a paper and gave it to the wind, but it whirled in airy circles round and round, till at length it was caught by a hawthorn near the castle.

He now began to reflect on other means of attracting the attention of his companions, when he saw some men on horseback arrive at the inn. They surrounded Ludovico and Jordano; a firing was heard, sabres glittered, and both parties soon disappeared in a cloud of dust that moved towards the left. It seemed that Jordano and Ludovico were carried off, and the place was void of any appearance of men.

The departing sun left Rinaldo pensive at his window, and there the moon and stars still found him.

Three days had now passed, and the evening of the fourth was come, when, as Rinaldo sat upon his couch, the door opened, and a female figure in a veil suddenly appeared. She stood still near the door; and Rinaldo having contemplated her during a few moments in silence, asked—" Who is there?"

She approached, came close to the couch, and held out her hand.

" Do I know you or not?"

" You do."

" Who are you?"

" Guess."

" How can I? Yet I suspect."

" Then who am I?"

" Olympia."

Olym.—You have guessed right.

Rin.—How came you hither?

Olym.—As you came.

Rin.—By force?

Olym.—Not so; but by the same road.

Rin.—You know, then, the private ways of the castle?

Olym.—Not yet; 'tis the first time I have been here.

Rin.—What wilt thou?

Olym.—Can you ask? I am come to see you.

Rin.—Can you, then, leave the mayor?

Olym.—You see I can.

Rin.—But will he not be jealous?

Olym.—He is a good-natured man.

Rin.—So much the better for you.

Olym.—And for you also; he is one of us.

Rin.—That is to say, he is a machine of the old man of Fronteja?

Olym.—The same.

Rin.—Bravo!

Olympia now took a seat by Rinaldo, who burst out laughing.

Olym.—What diverts you?

Rin.—Many things.

Olym.—That is no answer to my question.

Rin.—Answer me first.

Olym.—What do you ask?

Rin.—Wherefore am I here?

Olym.—For your own safety.

Rin.—Who ordered me to be seized and brought here?

Olym.—Your friend.

Rin.—The old man?

Olym.—The same.

Rin.—To whom belongs this castle?

Olym.—To one of our friends; were you not here, you would be in a dungeon. Ludovico and Jordano are probably now in fetters; the black fraternity are, as you know, very powerful.

Rin.—You know, then, that they persecute me?

Olym.—I know it.

Rin.—What? And do not the black fraternity also belong to your party?

Olym.—Not to my knowledge; if so, how could they be your enemies?

Rin.—'Tis all a masquerade, perhaps?

Olym.—And why?

Rin.—To raise the merit of the protection you pretend to afford.

Olym.—That is a joke we have no need of.

Rin.—Then who are these blustering scoundrels?

Olym.—What you have said; yet they are very powerful, by means of their secret bonds of union.

Rin.—Are they more powerful than the old man of Fronteja, and they who devote themselves to him?

Olym.—No; but yet they are very powerful. Meanwhile your letter to the mayor has given them a powerful blow; it is now in the hands of government, who are, besides, very watchful of these men. A little more, and they will be utterly destroyed. But of that you will hear; now for my message to you.

Rin.—What is it?

Olym.—I am to ask you whether you are still resolved to go to Corsica?

Rin.—You have but to command your machine.

Olym.—We would hear your determination from your own free will.

Rin.—Then I am not your machine?

Olym.—You are free; the old man leaves you to your own free will. Even should you determine not to go to Corsica, you may leave this castle as soon as you please, and go where you please.

Rin.—I take you at your word.

Olym.—You may do so if you choose.

Rin.—I do.

Olym.—Then you will not go to Corsica?

Rin.—When I have spoken with the old man, and with Luigino, I will explain myself more fully.

Olym.—And not to me?

Rin.—No.

Olym.—Then good night.

Thus saying she arose, went towards the door, stopped, and seemed waiting for something. Rinaldo wished her a good night's rest. Upon this she came back, and seized his hand; but Rinaldo drew it back. She continued standing.

Rin.—Do you want anything more?

Olym.—I have more to say to you.

Rin.—Then say it.

Olym.—It is something——

Rin.—Unpleasant?

Olym.—More than unpleasant.

Rin.—Be it what it may, I must and will hear it.

Olym.—Your dear Rosalia is ill.

Rinaldo sighed, but made no answer.

Olympia waited in vain for a reply, and again went to the door, and stood still.

Olym.—Have you no commands for Rosalia?

Rin.—A thousand good wishes for her recovery.

Olym.—But suppose she——Rinaldo, Rosalia is very ill.

Rin.—Oh heavens!

Olym.—Should she die——

Rin.—'Tis no enviable fate to be the paramour of a proscribed robber-captain. What happiness could the poor girl rationally expect here upon earth, to see her lover upon the rack, herself exposed in the pillory, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment in a house of correction, for having loved him?

Olym.—Rinaldo, you forget the laurels that flourish for you in the vales of Corsica.

Rin.—These are no bridal chaplets for a girl, nor do they really flourish for me. That venerable plant, formed for the brows of victorious and triumphant emperors, will never cool the temples of a robber. On my forehead the laurel itself would fade, and posterity would think it a satire on every hero it ever graced.

Olym.—Unfortunate man!

Rin.—Now you call me by my true name.

Olym.—What will, what can become of you?

Rin.—Alas! it is too easy to guess.

Olym.—You are dispirited. How will all this end?

Rin.—As it must end.

Olym.—Alas! Can you speak thus? Resume your fortitude, and be what you ever were—a great man.

Rin.—Shame not the truly great by such a parallel.

Olym.—History will inform you——

Rin.—No comparisons! no examples! I know what I am.

Olympia was silent, and covered her face over with her veil. Rinaldo beat his forehead, and sighed deeply.

Olym.—Rinaldo! Rinaldo!

Rin.—Rosalia is very ill?

Olym.—I must not deceive you: she is—

Rin.—Dead?

Olym.—Dead!

Rin.—Farewell, dear girl. 'Tis well for thee thou art no more! Olympia!

Olym.—Rinaldo!

Rin.—'Tis well for her, is it not? 'Twere well for me were I, too, dead. But yet a little while——

Rinaldo turned to the wall and wept, and Olympia left the room. At length he threw himself on his couch and slept.

A noise awoke him from a horrid dream. He perceived a strong light in the room, and rubbing his eyes, saw a table set out with wax candles, bottles, and glasses, at which Cinthio, Nero, Ludovico, Jordano, Luigino, Olympia, and Eugenia were sitting, with a candle before each guest. Rinaldo beheld them in silence, as in an optical exhibition, while they, not perceiving he was awake, proceeded with their conversation.

Lud.—They had already handcuffed us, and began to talk of horrid things: for example—of the rack, of beheading, of hanging, and the like. This made us somewhat uneasy and we imagined we were about to end our lives amid the cruelest torments, when assistance unexpectedly arrived.

Jordano.—Ay; we shall never forget the old man of Fronteja. Come, let us drink his health.

All.—Success to the old man of Fronteja.

Lud.—He has also frequently rescued our brave Rinaldini from the hands of justice. Yes, he would long since have been food for crows, had not the friendly old man interposed.

Olym.—That is true. Rinaldini is indebted to him for his life in various ways; he ought to be very grateful to him.

Cinthio.—Certainly. My friend Rinaldo is not ungrateful. 'Tis a great pleasure to me to have become acquainted with the good old man and his worthy friend Olympia. There was I, forester of a trifling bailiwick, when the only luxury I experienced was to kill a badger or a wild cat, to avoid starving; but now we shall hunt the proud and insolent French.

Luig.—Perdition seize them! Long live the brave Corsicans, who are expecting our arrival, and that of their deliverer!

All.—Long live the brave Corsicans!

Lud.—Perdition seize the French!

Nero.—How long may it be before we can join our countrymen?

Luig.—At the utmost, a couple of months.

Nero.—Were it but a couple of days, I could scarcely wait so long to salute them.

Lud.—But how strong are we?

Luig.—We shall embark above four hundred strong, and shall find in Corsica above three thousand friends, besides those who will join us as soon as we shall have struck the first blow, and occupy some tenable position. Fort Ajalo will be first taken.

Nero.—And the French garrison must be put to death.

Lud.—They must. We must make ourselves feared. Thunder and lightning! there will be a terrible alarm when it is known that the invincible corps of Rinaldini is there. They are very devils to their enemies, and the most generous of mankind to their friends. They shed their blood for the liberty of the injured and oppressed Corsicans. Yes, my friends, 'twill bring us fame and honour. Already do I see our names shine upon the obelisk of fame, that will be erected to us and our victorious arms;—and posterity will say, "Behold the deeds of men who have been called robbers and banditti? behold their names in letters of gold, and at the head of them that of Rinaldini."

Nero.—Will our old man go with us?

Luig.—Undoubtedly. He, too, is a Corsican, and has the good of his country much at heart.

Eugenia.—And will all the ladies at Fronteja go with us?

Olym.—All. Many of them will fight beside their brave companions with manly courage and patriotism; others will weave chaplets for the victorious combatants, and their kisses will reward every act of heroism.

A tall handsome man, with a noble air, now entered the room. Luigino called him Astolfo, and Olympia gave him the appellation of brother. He sat down, and another wax candle was lighted, and set before him. His glass was filled, and the conversation proceeded.

Cin.—Well, how are we? Is the castle full?

Astolfo.—Oh that it were full of enemies to the French! We are ninety strong already.

Lud.—Oh that we were already arrived in Corsica! Yes, the cutler or gunsmith, whose weapon first destroys a Frenchman, will be so dear to me, that I will pay for ten masses for his soul, and all his family shall sing a *de profundis* when he dies, with wax candles at my expense.

Ast.—Early in the morning, at the latest, Amalato will be here with his thirty men.

Luig.—Where is Malatesta with his party?

Ast.—He is coming round by the mountains of Tolona. He is gone out once more in pursuit of the black fraternity.

Lud.—God reward him! If he can but exterminate that cursed band!

Oym.—I doubt not that you often remember these black men in prayers.

Lud.—Oh yes, the cursed scoundrels! They have made so deep an impression on me, that I feel it in all my nerves and limbs every time the wind changes.

Jordano.—Yes, they handled you very roughly indeed; you must think of them every new moon.

Lud.—Every time the wind changes, I tell you. They stamped a perpetual almanack on

my hide; I feel it in every vein whenever the cock crows; but the first time any of them come within my reach, I will pay them handsomely; yes, their flesh shall be so cut to pieces when the crows come to feed on them, that they may tear it off without trouble. Harkye, I feel such a rage against these black gentlemen, that I would load them with all the mortal sins of the world and with all the pests of the Levant.

Rinaldo was still listening to the conversation, while the goblet went gaily round, when the door opened, and the old man of Fronteja entered. They all arose from their seats, and saluted him with the greatest respect. He gave them a friendly nod, sat down, and joined in the circle. Two wax candles were placed before him, and his glass was filled.

Old Man.—Pure as the wax and flame of these candles is the view of all those who are here assembled together, resolved to tread the soil of a country, which, when manured with the blood of its tyrants, will yield us a rich harvest of fame. We sow and reap for the oppressed. We are the husbandmen of fame and justice. We come to burst the chains of a brave, an unhappy, and an enslaved nation.

Luig.—'Tis true; we come to save them.

Old Man.—The day of vengeance and salvation is nigh, and a new sun rises upon Corsica. Spirit of the noble but unfortunate Theodore, appear to the friends of thy country, which thou lovedst and wouldst have saved!

As he said this, he raised his hand above his glass, and suddenly the wine began to hiss in it like fermenting must. The bubbles rose high up, and leaving the rim of the glass, formed a pyramid, changed to a mantling cloud, burst in the air, and became a vapoury, indistinct appearance of a man. The lights became dim; the form hovered over them, clear and transparent, high above the table like a cloud, then disappeared. The lights again brightened, but the form was gone. The company sat in speechless astonishment, and the old man drank off his glass to the memory of King Theodore.

They were all still sitting in silent expectation, when the old man turned towards Rinaldo, and asked him, "Have you nothing to say to your friends?"

Rin.—Much good may it do you all.

Old Man.—Is that all the interest you take in our vast design?

Rin.—All I can do is to wish you well.

Old Man.—Has the great, the inspiring wish to become the saviour of Corsica, forsaken you?

Rin.—Your enterprise is in very good hands.

Old Man.—Do you renounce the fame you would acquire by participating in this just and noble achievement?

Rin.—I renounce every attempt at a species of fame which becomes me not. No palms of honour can grow for a captain of banditti.

Old Man.—Mean-spirited man! you are no longer the bold, intrepid Rinaldini; your soul is gone from you; you are scarcely the shadow of your former bravery. Oh, my friend! could but your former instructor, the worthy Onorio, hear you, what would he say? How would he deplore your present condition! What can we do for you?

Rin.—If you are really my friends, forget even that my name is Rinaldini. With that name connect no expectation of brave actions, and let me die in peace, unknowing and unknown.

Cin.—Rinaldo! My friend!

Rin.—I pity you, who have been torn from your peaceful solitude! You were too happy for a robber, and, therefore, your happiness has ceased.

Old Man.—I pity *you*.

Rin.—Give me some proof of your friendship.

Old Man.—What proof do you desire?

Rin.—Procure me, thou all-powerful man! a safe retreat from this island.

Old Man.—Whither?

Rin.—To some other small unnoticed island, where I may find room for myself, and grass for my goats. There will I end my life in peace, amid shepherds and fishermen, unknowing and unknown.

Old Man.—How is that possible? you are known to all the world.

Rin.—Not in every part of it. I bequeath you my buried treasures, and will tell you where they lie; they will aid you in your projected enterprise. Let some ship bear me over the waves, and along the shores of the land whose chains you are about to break.

Old Man.—You are ill, my friend. We cannot suffer you to be out of our sight till you recover.

Rin.—Will you be my physician? If so, be as compassionate as your brethren, and give me an early grave.

As he said this he covered his face, and the company remained totally silent. The old man gave a sign to Astolfo, who left the room, but perfect silence still prevailed.

At length drums were heard in the castle, and trumpets rent the air; upon which all the company started up, and "We are betrayed!" was repeated on all sides. Rinaldo, too, sprang from his couch, and, seizing his sabre, hastened to the door.

Here the old man embraced him, and cried out, with transport, "Yes, you are still the intrepid, the courageous Rinaldini. The beat of drums, and the sound of trumpets, have awakened you from your lethargy, and the man again appears. These sounds shall accompany you to Corsica, and the thunder of our cannon shall proclaim to the enemy that the avenger is come."

Rinaldo beheld the old man with concern and agitation, and his sabre fell from his hand. "Ha!" cried he, "you know the game you are playing with me; but I do not know my own heart."

The old man gave him a significant look, and said, "We have but awakened what was slumbering within you. Now we know you are still the brave Rinaldini. Trumpets and drums may be silent, but your soul speaks louder than your mouth. What you may say when dispirited and cast down, we believe not: we know what sounds restore you to your friends. That which the voice of friendship could not effect, the sound of the trumpet has brought about. This is the call of honour. Now we know you are the hero we sought for."

Rin.—You are mistaken. I will seek my death in battle.

Old Man.—No man seeks it who wishes to live with shepherds and fishermen, surrounded by his goats; such only seek to shun danger, while the truly bold meet it with undaunted front.

Rin.—Despair is not bravery; it converts cowards into lions.

Old Man.—'Tis enough, Rinaldo; we know you.

On a hint from the old man, the rest of the company silently withdrew, one by one, without noise; and at length the old man himself quitted the room, saying, "We leave you to repose."

Rinaldo again threw himself upon his couch, and the remembrance of the scene that had passed since the time of his awakening, played upon his senses like a dream.

On the following day Rinaldo did not leave his room, but remained alone and undisturbed. The day after, when he wished to speak with Cinthio, he received for answer that he was no longer at the castle. Upon this he desired an interview with the old man of Fronteja, but he also was no longer there.

Presently after came Astolfo, to whom Rinaldo declared his desire to quit the castle.

"That depends on your own free will," replied Astolfo; "however, I do not advise you to it, as you had better be accompanied by some of our party. The black fraternity are everywhere watching for you; and while alone, you are always in danger of being exposed to their unlimited revenge. Our party are going by degrees to the coast, where they will embark, and sail for Corsica, for we must lose no more time in reaching the place of our destination."

Rinaldo appeared thoughtful, but soon recovered himself, and said, "Have you seen a young woman at Fronteja, named Rosalia?"

Ast.—I saw her ill and dying.

Rin.—Is she really dead?

Ast.—As certainly as we two are alive.

Rin.—A natural death?

Ast.—What would you say? If you suspect anything, your suspicions are unfounded; the old man loved her as though she were his own daughter.

Rin.—And yet he has not said a word of her death to me.

Ast.—That is his manner—he does not willingly speak of the dead.

Rin.—Rosalia was very dear to me.

Ast.—'Tis so said. I also shall leave the castle to-morrow; if you will go with me, you will have protection. We are all going by degrees, as we have told you, to the coast.

Rin.—Are you really Olympia's brother?

Ast.—I am.

Rin.—A Corsican?

Ast.—The same.

Rin.—Is Luigino also gone?

Ast.—He is.

Here they were both silent, and Astolpho at length approached the door, when Rinaldo turned himself suddenly round, and said, "I will leave the castle with you to-morrow."

Astolfo rejoiced in this resolution, and left the room.

The next morning Rinaldo mounted a horse, and departed with Astolfo. Here and there they met with several of their party upon the mountains, divided into small troops, though at no great distance from each other. They had very little conversation, however, on the road. In a few days they reached Sutera, where they rested a few more, and then took the direct road for Syracuse. They left that city on their left, stayed a couple of days at a villa which seemed to belong to an acquaintance of their party, and then travelled toward the plains of Marsala.

Here they again took up their quarters at a villa, from which Alstolfo made a day's excursion alone.

On his return, he said, "Here you may remain in peace and safety till we call you to embark; should the time seem long, go sometimes to the mountains of Sambuca, where you will find a party of our people encamped. I am now going to the old man, and hope to see you again soon.'

Astolfo set off, and Rinaldo found everything he could wish for at the villa. A gardener and his daughter were his inmates and attendants, and some servants of the Corsican fraternity came to and fro.

The gardener's daughter, whose name was Serena, seemed a good-natured girl, and became Rinaldo's companion, both at home and in his solitary walks. In her he beheld, as it were, a second Rosalia, and became so accustomed to her company that he could not leave her. She amused him with little tales of ghosts and knights, and sang not only various ballads she knew before, but several which Rinaldo composed to please her.

In these mutual and simple delights, one day chased on another with so much rapidity, that Rinaldo had been three weeks at the villa ere he reflected how he came there, and whither he was going.

Once, as he was sitting with her in an arbour, he remarked, that during the two last days she had appeared less happy than usual.

She replied, "It may be so; but it is my father's fault."

Rin.—Your father's?"

Serena.—Yes; he told me you would not stay here long.

Rin.—And does that distress you?

Ser.—Certainly; I am now accustomed to you. We ought to make no new acqaintances, since we must always at length be parted. In my opinion, when two people form a friendship, and like each other, they should always continue together.

Rin.—And do you like me?

Ser.—I thought you must long since have perceived it.

Rin.—But how do you know whether I like you?

Ser.—I think so, because you always desire to have me with you. We do not love the company of those who are disagreeable to us. But that is not the case with you; for whenever I am absent from you for an hour or two, you always call, Serena, where are you? And then I hear you call with so much pleasure, I have sometimes even contrived to be thus called by you on purpose.

Rin.—But of what benefit can it be to you that I like you?

Ser.—Very great. It makes me gay, and happy, and cheerful, and light-hearted.

Rin.—But since I cannot remain here——

Ser.—That is very sad! Where, then, are you going?

Rin.—Away from this island to another country.

Ser.—Is it as pretty a place?

Rin.—Oh, yes.

Ser.—Is there another Serena there who likes you?

Rin.—Perhaps I may find several.

Ser.—If you have to seek them, why not stay here, where you have already found one?

Rin.—I have duties, ties, business.

Ser.—I am sorry for it. When you go, I shall be very unhappy.

Rin.—You will soon be gay and cheerful again, and all will be well.

Ser.—Oh no, by no means! Do but stay, and all will be well indeed.

Rin.—It cannot be.

Ser.—That is very sad. And will you not come back?

Rin.—'Tis improbable.

Ser.—Were it even a year, I could endure it.

Rin.—My dear girl! you know not——

Ser.—Indeed I know not much, but I may be able to learn, perhaps, a great deal more; and, besides, if you will be my instructor——Ah! what would I not readily learn of you!

Rin.—Learn, then, to forgot me when I am gone.

Ser.—That is impossible! No, it cannot be! That I know already. We can never forget those we love.

Rin.—Do you love me then?

Ser.—Alas! yes.

Rin.—That is not well.

Ser.—How could it be better? Who can forbid my loving you?

Rin.—What can you hope from such a passion?

Ser.—To be loved by you in return.

A messenger now came in, and delivered a letter to Rinaldo. It was written by Clathio, who amicably reproached him for not having yet visited his friends on the mountains, and invited him to come speedily. Rinaldo wrote an answer, promising to comply with his request; and as soon as he had dispatched the messenger, went to the sea-coast, where he found some fishermen in the bay, loading a boat with provisions. He approached, and entered into conversation with them.

Rin.—Where are you carrying those provisions?

Fisherman.—To Pantalaria.

Rin.—To Pantalaria?

Fisher.—Yes. Do you not know that island?

Rin.—How should I? Is it far off?

Fisher.—Only sixty miles, a mere stone's throw.

Rin.—Is it very populous?

Fisher.—Except a small town and castle, there are not three hundred inhabitants; for it contains only two small villages and a few country houses. The whole island is surrounded by barren rocks; but within these it is very beautiful and luxuriant. In the midst of it is a most fruitful valley, and the hills are cultivated to the summit. It abounds in corn, wine, oil, and oranges; and what the island does not produce, we carry them.

Rin.—Are not the inhabitants very poor?

Fisher.—They are, indeed, far from rich, but very industrious and benevolent. What they want most is money; a piece of gold is so uncommon with them, that it passes for a curiosity. From time to time, however, they dig up ancient coins, of which they make money in Sicily. They spend very little, and a few pieces of silver last them a long time.

Rin.—These good people seem to live quite in patriarchal simplicity.

Fisher.—Simple enough. There is but one church on the island, except the three in the town.

Rin.—But yet they are very pious people?

—Oh yes! there is a convent of St Clare in the town, and a small monastery in the

country, where six Franciscan monks reside. More could not be maintained there; but these trade with our island, and carry over what they want.

Rin.—I should like to see this little island.

Fisher.—That you may easily do; you have but to go over with us; we will take you for a reasonable price.

Rin.—When do you go?

Fisher.—To-morrow, two hours after sunrise.

Rin.—I will accompany you.

Fisher.—But you must be here in time, for we cannot wait.

Rin.—Fear not, I will come early enough; here is something for earnest, and to-morrow we shall meet again.

Thus he returned home, in a firm resolution of going to the island of Pantalaria, from which he intended never to depart. "There," said he, "perhaps I shall at length find a peaceful asylum amid the pure, uncorrupted sons of nature, and thus prepare myself, in tranquillity and repentance, for the kingdom of heaven."

The morning dawned, the harbinger of a bright and cheerful day, when Rinaldo thus poured forth his prayers to the Creator: "Grant that I may now find the long-desired repose! Turn not from the repentant sinner, but permit me to find a peaceful retreat amid the worthy and honest of my fellow creatures.'

Rinaldo now sprang from his couch, and taking with him his linen, his gold, his jewels, and his arms, sighed out a tender farewell as he passed the chamber of Serena, and hastened to the bay, where the fishermen expected him.

"You have kept your word," cried they as he approached, and then shook hands with him in a friendly and cordial manner.

'Are we all ready?" said one of them; and, being answered in the affirmative, folded his hands together in prayer. The rest followed his example.

Rinaldo, whose eyes overflowed with tears, sighed, and prayed also:—"Oh Lord, have mercy on a robber, who turns unto thee, and prays for a safe passage to that land of tranquillity for which he has so long panted. Oh, punish not these innocent men for having taken on board their bark a sinner, who can in no place fly from thy justice. If thou wouldst punish him, at least punish not these innocent men for his sake, but conduct them safely into port, and permit them to reap the fruit of their industry. Oh, turn not thine eyes from yonder peaceful island, nor punish its fields with barrenness, nor let thy thunders fall on its guiltless cottages. Accept my repentance, and permit me to live among good men, and become good myself!"

Their silent prayers being ended, they embarked. One of the fishermen steered, while the others plied the oar, to the measure of a song, and the bark ploughed the open sea, which was sweetly illumined by the morning sun.

Rinaldo stood up to contemplate the coast of Sicily, which continually receded from his eye. The mountains diminished into hills, houses and towers became points, and all the various scenery of nature melted into a blue indistinguishable mist.

The fishermen were gay and happy. continually joking and laughing, or singing songs, while Rinaldo listened to them with pleasure, and requested them to repeat those which particularly pleased him.

They were now becalmed, so that the fishermen were compelled to ply their oars without intermission; and even Rinaldo lent his assistance, which greatly pleased them, and induced them to pay him some handsome compliments. Toward night they perceived the lights in the castle; and a fresh breeze drove them toward the east coast of the island, where they entered a bay, and dropped anchor.

At daybreak they came on shore, and were presently surrounded by the inhabitants, who crowded to them from their scattered dwellings, and from a neighbouring village, to see all the fine things that would be offered to sale. The fishermen pitched a tent, and the scene presented by the numerous buyers and sellers became extremely animated. Men, women, and children hastened to the tent, and several musicians joined the throng; upon which they began to dance and sing, and pleasure smiled upon the scene.

Rinaldo withdrew from this noisy mirth to an olive grove, where, perceiving a beautiful

little cottage, about two hundred paces farther, he approached it. He there found a cheerful, industrious woman, pursuing her rustic labours, and asked her for a draught of milk, which she cheerfully gave him; but when he offered to pay for it, refused to take any money. Rinaldo pressed it upon her, and she accepted. Pleased with his generosity, she set out some figs, raisins, and rice-cakes; and thus they fell into conversation, in which the good woman was very communicative and free.

On Rinaldo inquiring after her husband, "Ah, holy Virgin!" exclaimed she, "he has been buried these two years, and left me to do all myself, with three children to maintain; two of them are boys; one seven years old, the other five; and the third a girl nine years old. The neighbours assist me in my little farm, and I am fresh and hearty, and will go on working till my children are able to take care of themselves, if God pleases to give me health and strength, and when I can work no longer, they may take care of me."

Rinaldo made her more and more communicative, and having thus secured her interest and good-will, began to declare his plans and his wishes.

Rin.—I like this place very much.

Old Woman.—Ay, truly, 'tis a very pretty place. We do not live indeed in luxury, but heaven has kindly given us all we want. I never knew a scarcity of provisions but once in all my life, and then we were supplied from Sicily. We felt our misfortune indeed very severely while it lasted, but it is now eight years since, and we have almost forgotten it.

Rin.—A thought has struck me. Suppose I were to stay with you a couple of months?

Old Woman.—That you must determine, sir, yourself. You know best whether you can make it agreeable.

Rin.—The air is good and pure, the sky is clear, and why should I not be happy here? Besides, I am free and unrestrained, and may live where I please.

Old Woman.—Well, sir, you can but try, and if you do not like to stay, you can easily return to Sicily.

Rin.—With all my heart; but where can I take up my quarters? Shall I live with you?

Old Woman.—With all my heart.

Rin.—It is my wish.

Old Woman.—I have two empty rooms in my house where you may lodge. They are at your service. But I tell you beforehand, you must behave well, or I shall call in the neighbours, and you will come off very ill.

Rin.—My good woman, you shall have no cause to complain of me. I shall live quiet and alone, and will assist you in your work.

Martha (for that was the woman's name) now conducted her new lodger into the house, and having shown him a small room, of which he approved, the bargain was presently struck. Rinaldo paid her two months in advance, which she immediately laid out with the Sicilian fishermen in corn and meat.

Rinaldo declared his resolution to the fisherman, who expressed great surprise at his plan. "Well," said one of them, "we shall return in a few weeks, and then we shall hear how you like the island. If it does not please you, we will take you back, for Sicily will always be Sicily, and, compared with this island, it is even more than a paradise."

Rinaldo stocked his new dwelling plentifully with w ne and other provisions; and as his shipmates were to sail the next day, he determined once more to metamorphose himself. He therefore cut his long hair round, like the country people of Pantalaria, and dressed himself exactly as a native.

Thus equipped, he undertook various labours in the garden, the vineyard, and other household affairs.

"I should never have imagined," said Martha, "that a great gentleman like you could have been so ready at our country business; and then to see you in our country dress, both pleases and surprises me—any one would swear you had been born and bred in the island."

"Believe it yourself," replied Rinaldo, "and you will do me a great pleasure."

Martha.—Well, well, that is a pleasure I can easily do you. We believe a great many things that are not much more probable; and, besides, I know no reason why I should not *believe it. But tell me how you learn* to be so clever at work?

Rin.—I was always very fond of such employment.

Martha.—It must be so, otherwise you could not possibly be so handy. Are you not a Sicilian?

Rin.—No; I was born in the Italian part of Switzerland, where my father had an estate.

Martha.—And did you not inherit it?

Rin.—My brother paid me a sum of money to give it up, and I have been travelling to see the world. But this island pleases me so much, that I am inclined to pass the remainder of my life here.

Martha.—Do so; get a house and flocks of your own, and take a wife, if you are a single man.

Rin.—I am free; but heaven knows how long I may continue so.

Martha.—Only let me beg I may choose for you.

Rin.—With all my heart. At present, however, I will stay with my good friend Martha.

Martha.—The neighbours will indeed jest a little, but that signifies not; we have both of us clear consciences.

Rin.—In this respect we have.

Martha.—And in others, too, I hope; at least I have. Have not you?

Rin. (confused.)—Why not?

Martha.—If not, be not offended; but I would not willingly live under the same roof with you. Bad consciences bring ill luck to a house.

This speech made a forcible impression on Rinaldo, who broke off the conversation, and resumed his labour.

Having remarked that Martha went out every evening with a large milk-pail, and was absent about an hour from home, Rinaldo asked, "Whither she went so far with her milk?"

"I carry it," said she, "to a villa that lies yonder behind the wood."

Rin.—To whom does the villa belong?

Martha.—To a gentleman of the town.

Rin.—And does he live there?

Martha.—No; for about six weeks past a couple of ladies have resided there, who are said to have come from beyond sea; but no one knows who they are, for they live quite private and retired, and have no communication with their neighbours—I have only seen them once myself. An old woman servant always takes my milk, and pays me. I once asked her who the ladies were, but she told me she knew not. The ladies, she said, were foreigners, and she is a native.

Rin.—Do the neighbours know anything of them?

Martha.—Nothing: very few indeed know they are there.

Rin.—Do they never go out?

Martha.—I asked that question once, and the old woman told me they went out sometimes into the garden, and once to the chapel upon the mountain.

Rin.—'Tis strange!

Martha.—There must be some mystery in it. Who knows what they may have done, that they are obliged to conceal themselves so closely. They must either be guilty of murder or theft.

Rin.—If they are pretty they may have stolen hearts, perhaps.

Rinaldo now formed a resolution to see the ladies, and on this object bestowed all his exertions, but in vain. He wished not to excite the observation of the neighbours, and yet could not otherwise accomplish his intentions. He therefore offered to carry Martha's milk for her, to which she readily consented, hoping thereby to learn something more concerning the ladies.

Thus Rinaldo visited the villa, and entered into conversation with the old woman.

Rin.—Neighbour Martha is not well to-day, and has asked me to bring her milk for her. I know not, however, to whom I am bringing it, or who is to use it.

Old Woman.—I will take it of you.

Rin.—But you do not use it all yourself?

Old Woman.—No.

Rin.—What, have you children?

Old Woman.—God forbid! I never had any.

Rin.—Then it is for your master or mistress?

Old Woman.—Something of that kind.

Rin.—I have my supper in my pocket; will you permit me to eat it here?

Old Woman.—I am not forbid to consent to that.

Rin.—I have worked very hard to-day, and am very tired, and will therefore take a little Syracusan wine.

Old Woman.—Syracusan wine! how did you come by that?

Rin.—I bought it of the Sicilian fishermen.

Old Woman.—But is it not very dear?

Rin.—Oh no; and then it tastes deliciously.

Old Woman.—That I believe. But poor people, like me, must not meddle with it. The ladies I serve only drink water and chocolate.

Rin.—Indeed! Would you like a glass?

Old Woman.—If I may make so free.

Rin.—Why not? I never offer anything that I do not mean. Come, drink.

She had scarcely emptied the glass, when the bell was rung very loud.—"That is on your account," said she. "Go, and promise to come again soon."

She now left him, but immediately came running down stairs, and exclaimed—"Oh, holy Virgin! one of the ladies has fallen down in a swoon. What shall we do?—she lies for dead."

Rinaldo did not stop long to reflect, but sprang up stairs, and through an anti-room into the chamber where the ladies were, and beheld one of them kneeling beside the other, who was just recovering from a fit; and Rinaldo remained unseen at the door.

The lady who was kneeling now stood up, and perceiving Rinaldo, screamed, and said—"What do you want here?"

Rinaldo approached her, and discovered, to his utter astonishment, Violanta and Dianora.

Violanta did not as yet clearly recollect him through his disguise; and Dianora, who presently came to herself, observed there was a stranger in the room, and asked who he was? Rinaldo stood speechless, but his eyes were fixed on Dianora.

Violanta observed him attentively, and anxiously exclaimed—"Friend, whoever you are, whatever chance has brought you hither, let us not behold that face. Leave us instantly."

"On no consideration in the world," replied Rinaldo.

Violanta contemplated him more closely, and at length screaming, exclaimed—"'Tis he himself!"

"Tis he himself!" repeated Dianora, and covered her eyes with her handkerchief.

"Oh, Dianora!" cried Rinaldo, "shall not the chance that has brought me here determine in my favour? Will you turn away your eyes from *me*, whom fate has thus wonderfully brought to this island, as it were, expressly to meet you? Oh, be not more cruel to me than fate itself!"

After a long pause, Dianora uncovered her eyes, and said—"Unhappy man! why art thou here? Is it not enough that your image everywhere pursues me, must you also thus persecute me yourself?"

"Chance," replied Rinaldo, "will have it so, and I am happy—happier in the little island of Pantalaria, than I could be in the great world."

The old woman now came in with water. Violanta went up to her, took her by the hand, and led her into the anti-chamber.

Rinaldo being now alone with Dianora, he approached her, and seizing her hand, fell upon his knees. She cast her eyes upon him with tender grief, and sighed. He moistened her hand with tears, covered it with kisses, and pressed it to his palpitating heart. Dianora wept bitterly, and her bosom heaved beneath the flowers that adorned it; her cheeks unconsciously reclined downward, and glowed against those of Rinaldo. Their lips seemed to attract each other involuntarily, and Rinaldo exclaimed aloud—"This kiss of forgiveness, this heartfelt seal of pardon, purifies me from my errors, and confirms me in a new course of life. You see, my dear Dianora, I am cut off from the noisy world, and have fled to this little island to live

in tranquillity and solitude. Yes, heaven itself approves my pious resolution. My prayers are heard; I am forgiven, and Providence has sent you to meet me upon the path of divine reconciliation. You are once more mine, and we shall now begin a new life."

"Oh, Rinaldo!" said Dianora, sighing, "soothe yourself not with these flattering dreams; let not these delusions fill you with such sweet, but fallacious hopes, which can never be realized."

"You cannot rob me of this strong conviction," replied Rinaldo; "you yourself are the path that leads to the accomplishment of my hopes, and what I here embrace is no vision, it is the sweetest of realities. Thus is my good fortune renovated in your arms."

As he said this, he laid his head upon her bosom, and tenderly embraced her. Dianora was unable to utter a word, and the scene was the more expressive in proportion to its silence.

Violanta found them in this situation, and passed into an inner room. Dianora now gently pushed Rinaldo from her. He arose, and stood with his eyes fixed on those of Dianora.

Dia.—Rinaldo! what mean those inquiring looks?

Rin.—Does not your heart tell you? Has heaven given you to me again, that I may again abandon you?

Dia.—Ah, Rinaldo! How can I—how ought I to answer that question?

Rin.—As your heart prompts you.

Dia.—No, we must not now listen to such partial counsellors.

Rin.—Whom, then, should we consult?

Dia.—Reason and reflection.

Rin.—These too are partial.

Dia.—Ah, no!

Rin.—Oh, shun these cold advisers, that can never make us happy! Heaven has separately pointed out to each of us this island as an asylum; let us thankfully acknowledge the value of the gift, and enjoy it.

Dia.—But whither would all this carry us?

Rin.—Whither but to happiness, through our own hearts.

Violanta now returned, and said, "If you would not wish that Rinaldo's stay should excite notice, even in our old servant, he must go away without delay."

"Oh, Violanta!" said Rinaldo, "you have never loved, or been separated from the idol of your heart, nor ever found again the object you had lost, and enjoyed the bliss of an unexpected and happy meeting, else your lips could never have uttered so dreadful a command."

"Let Dianora herself determine," replied Violanta.

Dianora beheld him with tenderness, and said, "Oh yes, Rinaldo, indeed you must leave us for the present."

Rin.—And never see you more! You will leave this island——

Dia.—No.

Rin.—Assuredly no?

Dia.—No.

Rin.—At least not without me?

Dia.—Not without you.

Rin.—Now then I will go, if you desire it; and to-morrow shall I see you again?

Dia.—To-morrow.

He again tenderly embraced her, and departed. Violanta accompanied him to the door, and, unconscious of his steps, he hurried back to his rustic retreat.

The next morning, at sunrise, Rinaldo's hostess was already in the field, and Rinaldo stood with panting heart before the villa, where the beloved object of his heart resided. He walked around the happy spot, yet knew not why he dared not enter it.

At length the solitary chapel caught his eye, whither he had been informed Dianora once went to pray. Impressed with this reflection, he went there, threw himself on his knees before the saint, and poured forth his soul in prayers and devotions.

At length he heard the sound of footsteps behind him, and starting up, beheld Dianora. He sprang toward her, pressed her to his bosom, and exclaimed, "Our hearts have once met and found each other; and now our souls, pursuing a like course, meet in the same pious object. *I have been praying* and adoring, and will not disturb the devotion of your apotheo-

soul. Pray also, and let me taste of happiness, through the acceptance of our joint petitions."

Thus saying, he led her to the altar, where she knelt down, and Rinaldo left the chapel. He also fell upon his knees beneath some lofty cypresses, and raising his hands towards heaven, prayed in silence, and with a flood of tears.

In this situation Dianora found him as she returned from the chapel, and softly approaching him, reclined over him, embraced him tenderly, and kissed his forehead, which was warm with the fervour of his devotions.

"Oh, Rinaldo," cried she, "surely you are now become a good man. Very consoling and encouraging were my prayers. The saint, methought, smiled acceptance on my petition, and a sweet tranquillity filled my heart. If Heaven has received you into favour, how can I reject you? My heart is yours; love will neither rob us of our peace, nor leave us without consolation."

Rinaldo accompanied her to the villa, where the old woman was informed that this peasant in disguise was a relation of her lady, whom chance and his love of solitude had brought to Pantalaria. The same story was related to Martha, who equally wondered and rejoiced at the discovery.

Everything now assumed a new form. Rinaldo was no longer the inmate of Martha, but removed to the villa, where the whole house underwent a new arrangement.

Rinaldo now inquired of Violanta the true cause of the sudden departure of the countess from the castle, where the black man first appeared to him; and learnt with astonishment, that a dreadful menace from the same black personage had determined her to that measure. Thus they reciprocally cleared up the mysterious appearances relative to the black fraternity, and they both agreed that the real obscurity of this business consisted in a conspiracy against the state; and that they only desired to employ the dreaded robber-captain as a machine for the completion of their plans, the true object of which was equally secret as the existence of the plot was certain. Violanta had already formed an opinion that the black fraternity might secretly pursue the same object with Rinaldini, and that it was incompatible with that object to permit him to renew an acquaintance which might frustrate their intentions.

Rinaldo felt no inclination to puzzle himself about a mystery which had little connection with his present situation, and thought himself but too fortunate in the present, to bestow his thoughts on past scenes which he was desirous to forget. He now stood, like an altered man, in a circle formed around him by love and friendship, and lost sight of objects that excited painful remembrances. Neither the scenes of violence and plunder in the Appenines, nor in Calabria and Sicily, could engage his thoughts. All had passed away like a vision, or a drama, in which he had performed a part, but which he had now forgotten, or, at least, was desirous to obliterate from his memory. He wished he had ever lived as he lived now; and whenever his thoughts returned to past scenes, it was to those of youthful happiness, when, in rural solitude, he tended his goats at pasture.

Being the youngest of the family, it fell to his lot, when scarcely ten years old, to tend the goats of his parents, who lived in no small degree of poverty. This patriarchal way of life, however, had not so many charms as to prevent him, at a more advanced age, from being desirous of changing his mode of life. He was very eager of knowledge, and felt a strong inclination once more to assist his brother in the vineyard or the field. This led him to seek the society of a hermit, who lived in the neighbourhood of the spot where he drove his goats to pasture. This hermit, whose name was Onorio, had not always worn his present solitary dress. He knew mankind—was a man of acute understanding, and had fled from the world, because, as he said, he had learnt to despise it.

This man readily undertook the task of instructing the inquisitive youth—became his tutor in reading and writing, communicated to him a great deal of knowledge by conversation, and supplied him with books, which Rinaldo devoured in solitude. They consisted of translations of Plutarch's Lives, Livy, and Quintus Curtius, books of knight-errantry, and the Italian historians. All these books gave a romantic turn to the imagination of Rinaldo, and had a striking influence on his plans and resolutions, as well as on all his actions.

He was seventeen years old when his friend and instructor, Onorio, suddenly disappeared, *writing, in* which he made Rinaldo heir of his little property. Rinaldo converted it

all, except the books, into money, and enlisted for a soldier. Here he hoped to realize the romantic ideas impressed upon his mind, but in vain. The machinery of an heroic life was not be to found in the papal troops, which he therefore quitted, and entered into the service of Venice. Nor did he continue in that long, but enlisted in the army of the King of Sardinia. Here fortune seemed to smile upon him. A general officer noticed him—promoted him to be corporal, and at length he was sent as ensign to Sardinia, to garrison Cagliari. Here an occasion arose in which he violated the laws of subordination, and was broken. This enraged him so much, that he revenged himself on his superior officer, like too many of his countrymen, by the stiletto, and took to flight. Thus being publicly accused of his crime, and finding safety nowhere, he wandered through Italty, an outcast from society, and destitute of a place of rest.

At length he joined the band of robbers, of whom he soon obtained the command—reduced them to a regular discipline, and lived among them as their captain.

In his present situation in the island of Pantalaria, he and Dianora formed many plans for their future life, and at length resolved on going to Spain, and from thence to the Canary Islands, there to live in peaceful tranquillity and concealment. Violanta determined to accompany them.

They now began to prepare all things for the execution of this plan, which occupied all their thoughts and industry. But fate soon frustrated their intentions.

One morning Rinaldo went, as usual, to the sea-side, where he saw a fishing-boat putting out to sea; he watched its course as it steered for Sicily, reflecting on his acquaintances there, and on his friend Serena. Lost amid these ideas, he threw himself down beneath a tree, where he soon perceived a noise behind him; he turned round, and saw, in the dress of the country, the old man of Fronteja walking toward him. Rinaldo sprang up, and would have fled, but the old man cried out, "Stay! Wherever you go I will follow you. Here we are alone."

Rin.—What would you with me? Why do you thus pursue me everywhere, as a bad conscience pursues a criminal, while I am still ignorant who you are? Why do you thus disturb me in my peaceful retreat, and poison, with your presence, the tranquil joys of solitude? If you are my evil genius, depart from me, for I am no longer the man I was, and hold no further communication with you.

Old Man.—Hey-dey! You are become a very powerful lord now you are in Pantalaria. Do you imagine you are speaking to one of your former banditti?

Rin.—By no means. But why should you persecute me in this peaceful rural retreat, and poison all the joys of my life?

Old Man.—You have not yet permitted me to speak.

Rin.—Speak.

Old Man.—You disappeared suddenly, and none of your friends or acquaintances in Sicily knew whither you were gone. I alone knew it—and that I did know it, my presence here is a proof. The black fraternity is, we hope, sufficiently humbled, and your friends have revenged you on your persecutors. Now all is ready for our departure to Corsica, and every one asks, where is our leader—where is the brave Rinaldini, who promised to fight at our head? Thus you were sought for everywhere, but found nowhere; they became impatient—called me to account for your sudden disappearance, and presumed to indulge in many conjectures to my prejudice. I knew whither you were gone; I knew what you had found here, and the resolution you had formed. You renounced the road of fame, and desired not the laurels that flourish for you in Corsica. You are, indeed, no longer the man you were—that I know and see; your achievements have soon grown old; your fame will go to the grave before you. You have chosen a road for yourself, aad disowned your friend. I upbraid you not with what I have done for you from time to time, nor with my having saved your life, for without my intervention your body would long ago have been suspended between heaven and earth. I do not envy you your repose, and am happy you enjoy it through me. If you are at peace, if you are happy, I may still rely on your silent gratitude. I desire not to receive it openly; but you cannot wish me to lose on your account.

Rin.—Lose! and on my account! What can you lose? you, who have all?

Old Man.—*No, I have not all I wish for, even for your sake.*

Rin.—I understand you not.

Old Man.—Your friends have thrown out a dishonourable suspicion against me. Several of them think you are no more. I would have preserved silence, and suffered you to enjoy your repose in Pantalaria; but a great part of our body absolutely refuse to embark till they receive certain intelligence of your being alive. You must save my honour, and show yourself to these doubters.

Rin.—How can you require it of me?

Old Man.—My honour depends on it.

Rin.—I cannot comply with your wish. I will not depart from hence.

Old Man.—Must I once more remind you that you are indebted to me for your life?

Rin.—You would rob me of it if you tore me from my peaceful abode. I will not go hence.

Old Man.—You will not?

Rin.—No.

Old Man.—Well, then these doubters must come to Pantalaria and see you themselves. This is the only way that remains.

Rin.—Reckon not upon it? I can go elsewhere.

Old Man.—Whither can you go, and I not know it?

Rin.—Oh heavens! Why should Providence deliver me into such hands? Old man, howsoever you may be called, or whosoever you may be, if the happiness and peace of any man was ever held sacred by you, have pity on me, and leave me in solitude and repose.

Old Man.—That I will; but you must rescue my honour from a false suspicion, which covers me with shame. Have I deserved this of you? Shall I suffer an accusation of having murdered you to remain unanswered? Shall our whole enterprise fail on this account, and the noble Corsicans in vain expect the promised aid? You cannot desire it. Show yourself to your friends, and then go wherever you please.

Rin.—If I did but know——

Old Man.—Know what?

Rin.—That what you require of me would procure me repose.

Old Man.—If you really possess peace of mind, you will take it with you wherever you go; but what you have not, you cannot transplant anywhere.

Rin.—I was possessed of such peace till you came enviously to rob me of it. If you really are a good man, and since you have once generously and disinterestedly saved my life, I cannot comprehend why you should again deprive an unfortunate wretch of that peace which heaven has granted him, and which is dearer to him than the miserable life you upbraid him with having saved. I will follow you, however, to Sicily.

Old Man.—My gratitude shall prove what I can do for you.

Rin.—I comply to save your honour, and forward the expedition to Corsica; but not to-day.

Old Man.—Take two days; at the expiration of that time we will meet again here.

Rinaldo was about to reply; but the old man suddenly went away, and Rinaldo soon lost sight of him behind the hill on the road toward the city.

Rinaldo, after a long deliberation, resolved to deceive the old man, and not accompany him to Sicily. He explained the circumstances to Dianora, and informed her of all his adventures, on which the old man had possessed so great an influence. This rendered Dianora very anxious for Rinaldo's safety, and she supported him in the resolution he had formed; but their chief difficulty was the procuring a vessel to convey them to the small island of Limosa or Lampidosa, or even to that of Malta in preference; and this difficulty appeared very great.

They were conversing on this subject, when a letter from the proprietor of the villa, in the city, was delivered to Dianora, informing her that a lady and her waiting-woman would that evening arrive at the villa, where they would take up their abode in the adjoining building, and recommending them to her friendship.

This intelligence made no alteration in the plan resolved on. Rinaldo went out in search of a vessel, but returned home without success.

Toward evening, the expected stranger sent to inform Dianora of her arrival, and soon after waited on her to make her acquaintance. Rinaldo would have left the room, but they met, and he perceived his old friend, Signora Olympia. Her waiting woman was Serena.

The presence of these persons in this peaceful villa embarrassed Rinaldo extremely. In the presence of Dianora, however, Olympia played the part of a stranger to him, nor was he in the slightest degree compromised by her conversation. But Serena was unpractised in the arts of dissimulation, and no sooner perceived Rinaldo in the anti-chamber than her countenance brightened up, and she overpowered him with questions, mixing now and then some slight reproaches with her inquiries, and Rinaldo with difficulty avoided an open explanation.

When Olympia had finished her visit, she sought an opportunity of speaking with her old acquaintance alone, and this she found in her chamber.

Rinaldo sought for it too himself, and wished, by some preliminary explanations, to give a fair turn to their mutual conduct toward each other. Thus, by degrees, the conversation became very interesting.

Rin.—The old man gave me an assurance that he alone, of all my acquaintance, knew I was here.

Olym.—That I believe; at least I knew not a word of it; you may imagine my surprise at finding you here. I have acted, however, in such a manner, that I doubt not you have nothing to reproach me with.

Rin.—And what brought you to Pantalaria?

Olym.—Necessity and Providence. Half my friends and acquaintance are arrested.

Rin.—Arrested!

Olym.—On the requisition of the French ambassador at Naples. We are betrayed, and our plans relative to Corsica discovered.

Rin.—Indeed!

Olym.—Guards are placed at the dwellings of the old man at Fronteja, and his young men are arrested. As yet he knows not of it. I bring him the first intelligence of this treachery.

Rin.—Could not so powerful a man avert this blow from himself and his friends?

Olym.—That I know not.

Rin.—Or perhaps he departed because he knew what was going forward?

Olym.—Of that I doubt.

Rin.—Will he be able to save his friends? or is the farce of his juggling tricks brought to a close?

Olym.—I know not what he will do.

Rin.—Do you think he, and you, and I, are safe in this island?

Olym.—Who can read in the book of time?

Rin.—I thought the old man could.

Here the old man himself entered the room. He seemed perfectly tranquil, and taking Olympia's hand, welcomed her on her arrival. Olympia beheld him with embarrassment and concern.

Old Man.—Daughter, you are confused?

Olym.—Oh, you know not——

Old Man.—I know wherefore you are come. I know what is transacting in Sicily.

Rin.—What do you know?

Olym.—And can you be so tranquil?

Old Man.—I cannot help it.

Olym.—No?

Old Man.—No.

Olym.—And do you abandon the enterprise on Corsica?

Old Man.—I am ready to go to Corsica.

Olym.—Still?

Old Man.—Why not? Will you accompany me?

Olym.—And your friends?

Old Man.—Will soon follow.

Olym.—All?

Old Man.—Most of them.

Olym.—Will you be able to rescue your friends who are in prison?

Old Man.—*You will see what will happen.*

Olym.—*Are we safe here?*

Old Man.—No; and therefore shall I sail from hence.

Olym.—When?

Old Man.—As soon as is requisite.

Rin.—Could you not avert this misfortune from your friends?

Old Man.—What has happened is your fault. Had you remained in Sicily, we had now been in Corsica. 'Tis you that must bear the blame of the misfortune that has befallen your friends. Your disappearance brought them into embarrassments, which rendered it necessary to postpone our departure, while I came to Pantalaria to find you, and thus our friends were apprehended, the French faction triumphs, and the black fraternity exult in our misfortunes. Me they shall not have in their power unless I choose, but you they will seek out, and find you in the arms of love; your career is run, and your friends are no longer powerful enough to protect you. You fall a sacrifice to your own imprudence; but what I *can* do for you in the last moments of your life, that I *will* do at the expense of my own safety. You shall learn how greatly I have been your friend.

Rin.—Do you consider me so irretrievably lost?

Old Man.—I cannot consider you otherwise. You, Olympia, will know what prudence advises.

Thus saying, the old man left them both in a state of embarrassment and alarm. Rinaldo asked Olympia what she proposed to do; to which she replied—"I will follow the old man."

Rinaldo left her, and went to Dianora, to whom he disclosed as much of the circumstances that now disturbed his peace as he thought proper, and persuaded her to leave the villa as soon as possible. Meanwhile he returned to his old hostess, and took possession of his former quarters.

At daybreak he went to the beach, and was at length fortunate enough to find a fishing-boat, of which the captain promised to convey him within three days to Limosa, as soon as the boat should be ready.

Till that time he proposed to stay at the farm of his hostess's brother, which lay about a league from the villa. He wrote to Dianora to leave the villa as privately as possible, and to join him, together with Violanta.

Meanwhile he reconnoitred the ground, and provided a secret retreat for himself, consisting of a cave in a rock, which he examined narrowly, and found perfectly convenient for concealment. He also stored it with food and ammunition.

He had left this spot, and was returning home, when he perceived, gliding between the hills on one side of him, a white female figure in a veil who, by her dress, could be no common peasant.

This circumstance struck him forcibly: he pursued her steps, and at length came up to her on a plain. She went toward a villa, from which a man in a plain dress, but not that of the country, came out to meet her, and taking her hand, led her into the house.

Rinaldo approached the villa, and found a girl cutting grass. He asked her, "Do you belong to this villa?"

"Yes," replied the girl.

"Are the lady and gentleman who have just entered your master and mistress?"

"Yes."

"What is their name?"

"I know not."

"How is that possible?"

"I have told you I do not know."

"Who are they?"

"Neither do I know that."

"Are you a native of this island?"

"Yes, and of this villa, of which my father is gardener."

"And does the villa belong to your master and mistress?"

"No, it belongs to Signor Mandrani, in the city; he is a rich man, and has let the villa to my present master and mistress."

"*Have they* been long here?"

"*The orange-trees* have been twice in bloom since they came."

"Are they foreigners?"

"Yes. Do you want anything of either of them, that you are so particular in your inquiries?"

"Oh, no."

Rinaldo gave the girl some money, and, leaving her, returned home, where his hostess presented him a letter from Dianora. She approved his prudence, but thought it better that she should remain at the villa till the departure of the boat was fixed and certain.

Martha was dispatched with an answer to Dianora; but she was scarcely gone before the old man of Fronteja entered Rinaldo's apartment. Rinaldo asked him, with chagrin, what brought him thither?

Old Man.—My friendship for you.

Rin.—Can I then nowhere be safe from your importunities?

Old Man.—Nowhere, as long as you live—never, while I am more your friend than you know how to value.

Rin.—How have you again discovered my abode?

Old Man.—That must be very unimportant to you. 'Tis enough that I am here, and (if you will follow me, and take my advice) am here for your advantage.

Rin.—Indeed!

Old Man.—Still you may be saved; I will still bring you safe to Corsica.

Rin.—Indeed!

Old Man.—This haughty conduct cannot indispose me to serve you, because I am your friend, as you will perhaps discover when it is too late, in the last moment of your life. Now I repeat it, you may still be saved—but not after this day.

Rin.—Indeed!

Old Man.—Most certainly. By the Almighty that rules us, not after this day. Be not astonished. I speak that which is certain. Follow the advice of your friend, Rinaldo. Accompany me—save yourself—and spare me those tears which I shall shed over your grave.

Rin.—To-morrow do you say my fate is determined?

Old Man.—To-morrow.

Rin.—To-morrow?

Old Man.—To-morrow, and to-morrow for ever. The morning that will smile on you after this present night, will be the last of your life, if you remain here, and do not go with me.

Rin.—Give me proof of what you say.

Old Man.—How can I?

Rin.—I will believe you. But let me see some miracle.

Old Man.—How can I?

Rin.—Good night.

Old Man.—You believe me not?

Rin.—No. To-morrow will not be the last of my days.

Old Man.—It will—it will, by the Almighty, and by my immortal soul!

Rin.—You wish to entice me to Corsica. I will not go. I defy your prophecy. I will stay here.

Old Man.—Now then, if you will not seize the hand I offer for your salvation, still shall my friendship remain with you, and my tears shall accompany you to the land from which you can never return.

As he said this, his head sank, and he remained a few moments in that posture, then went to the door, which sprang open with a loud noise. The light in the room grew dim, and a white dazzling form glided in.

The old man exclaimed, "Great heavens! Rosalia!" and rushed out of the room.

"Thou juggler!" cried Rinaldo, then casting his eyes upon the form, actually perceived the face of Rosalia. He started back; she opened her arms, seemed to press something against his breast, beckoned him, and vanished.

The next morning Rinaldo awoke ere the first dawn of day, having slept but little. "This is the day," exclaimed he, "which is to put a period to my life. Who told the old man, with such certainty, that this day shall be my last, and that only if I stay in the island?"

He arose, wrote to Dianora, and having dispatched the letter to her, set forward to his cave, which he determined not to leave during the whole day, in order to falsify the prophecy of the old man.

He had already approached the rock, when he perceived on the beach, at a distance, near the side of the cave, some Sicilian soldiers. This struck him so forcibly, that he left the path, and took another, leading to a wood.

He had scarcely reached it, when he perceived a strong party of soldiers in the valley marching toward it. He therefore left the wood, and went toward the villa, where he had seen the unknown gentleman and lady the day before.

He found the garden-door open, and entered it. The unknown gentleman immediately came out of a pavilion to meet him, and they instantly recognised each other. He was the Prince della Roccella.

"My prince!" exclaimed Rinaldo, with astonishment.

"Unfortunate man," said the prince, "are you here?" and immediately returned into the pavilion.

Rinaldo, however, ventured to follow him, and threw himself upon his knees before him. He heard a cry of terror, and perceived upon a sofa the beautiful Aurelia. This sight overpowered him, and he was unable to rise.

The prince gave him his hand, and raising him, said, "If you remain in this island, this is the last moment of our stay here."

"No," said Rinaldo, hesitating, "I will not remain here. To-morrow, at daybreak, I shall leave the island, and you will see me no more. Thank heaven, I have again seen you alive. This interview is one of the happiest moments of my wretched life."

"Are you here also connected with your men?" said the prince.

"No," replied Rinaldo, "I am no longer in that horrible connexion; those bands of shame that once bound me are torn, and I am now, as it were, another man."

Aurelia arose from the sofa, and was about to leave the pavilion, when the gardener came out of breath, saying, the villa was surrounded by Sicilian soldiers.

"That is on my account," cried Rinaldo, in broken accents.

"Unfortunate man!" said Aurelia, and sank again upon the sofa.

"Try to save yourself," said the prince.

"It is too late," said Rinaldo, sighing; "I have despised the counsel and warning of a friend—it is too late."

A loud noise was now heard near the pavilion, which was immediately surrounded by soldiers, and an officer entered.

"Here he is," said a voice.

Rinaldo turned toward the voice, and his mortal enemy, the black man, stood before him.

"Have I deceived you?" said he to the officer; and pointing to Rinaldo, "This," said he, "is Rinaldini—seize him—hold him fast!"

"Are you Rinaldini?" said the officer.

"I am," replied Rinaldo.

A confusion now arose about the pavilion, and the old man of Fronteja rushed in. "Rinaldo," said he, "I have promised you my friendship, even in death. I keep my word—you cannot now be saved—farewell!" As he said this, he drew a poniard, and stabbed him in the breast before any one could prevent him.

Rinaldo fell upon the sofa, near Aurelia, who immediately swooned.

The old man turned toward the black man, and said, "Now you are lost."

He then cast his eyes on Rinaldo, and said, "Your friend Onorio could only close his unfortunate tutorship by your death. You ought to have been a hero, and became a robber. You would not forsake the course you had pursued, and your traitor could not behold you upon the scaffold."

Then wiping the tears from his eyes, and turning to the officer, he said, "In the name of the king, seize this black traitor, and as for me, conduct me to Naples. I must be tried by the laws of my sovereign. There I shall know how to justify my conduct."

THE END.

Printed by CHARLES REYNELL, Little Pulteney street.

MAY MARTIN;

OR,

THE MONEY DIGGERS.

A GREEN MOUNTAIN TALE.

BY

THE HON. JUDGE THOMPSON.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY J. CLEMENTS, LITTLE PULTENEY STREET,
FOR THE PROPRIETORS OF
THE ROMANCIST AND NOVELIST'S LIBRARY.
1841.

MAY MARTIN.

CHAPTER I.

In one of those rough and secluded towns, situated in the heart of the Green Mountains, is a picturesque little valley, containing, perhaps, something over two thousand acres of improvable land, formerly known in that section of the country by the appellation of "The Harwood Settlement," so called from the name of the original proprietor of the valley. As if formed by some giant hand literally scooping out the solid mountain, and moulding it into shape and proportion, the whole valley presents the exact resemblance of an oval basin, whose sides are composed of a continuous ridge of lofty hills bordering it around, and broken only by two narrow outlets at its northerly and southerly extremities. The eastern part of this valley is covered by one of those transparent ponds which are so beautifully characteristic of Vermontane scenery, laying in the form of a crescent, and extending along beneath the closely encircling mountains on the east nearly the whole length of the interior landscape, for ever mirroring up from its darkly bright surface, faintly or vividly, as cloud or sunshine may prevail, the motley groups of the sombre forest, where the more slender and softer tinted beech and maple seem struggling for a place among the rough and shaggy forms of the sturdy hemlock, peering head over head up the steeply ascending cliffs of the woody precipice. While here and there, at distant intervals, towering high over all, stands the princely pine, waving its majestic head in solitary grandeur, a striking but melancholy type of the aboriginal Indian still occasionally found lingering among us, the only remaining representative of a once powerful race, which have receded before the march of civilized men, now destined no more to flourish the lords of the plain and the mountain. This pond discharges its surplus waters at its southern extremity in a pure stream of considerable size, which here, as if in wild glee at its escape from the embrace of its parent waters, leaps at once, from a state of the most unruffled tranquillity, over a ledgy barrier, and, with noisy reverberations, goes bounding along from cliff to cliff, in a series of romantic cascades, down a deep ravine, till the lessening echoes are lost in the sinuosities of the outlet of the valley. From the western shore of this sheet of water the land rises in gentle undulations, and with a gradual ascent, back to the foot of the mountains, which here, as on every other side, rear their ever-green summits to the clouds, standing around this vast fortress of nature as huge centinels posted along the lofty outworks to battle with the careering hurricanes that burst in fury on their immovable sides, and arrest and receive on their own unsoathed heads the shafts of the lightning descending for its victims to the valley below, while they cheerily bandy from side to side the voicy echoes of the thunderpeal with their mighty brethren of the opposite rampart.

Nor is the beauty of the minor features of the landscape surpassed by the bold grandeur of the main outlines. The interior of the valley, for miles in extent, uniformly sloping to the eastward, is checked with beautiful alternations of lawn and woodland, for ever richly clothed in their season with the wavy and lighter verdure of the cultivated field, or the deep-tinted and exuberant foliage of the forest, while a thousand gushing rills come dancing down from the surrounding heights to meet the morning sun, and glitter in his first smile, as he looks in over the eastern barrier on his return from his diurnal circuit.

At the period of which we are about to write, the rude dwellings of the small band of settlers, who then inhabited the valley, were scattered at different intervals along the road, which entering from the south, wound round the westerly margin of the pond, and passed off through the interlapping mountains towards Canada. Of these dwellings, the largest and most respectable in appearance, was the one situated in the most southerly part of the valley. The old

log-house of tne pioneer, still standing in the back ground surrounded by weeds and briars, had here given place to a new-framed house of one story, which, together with the appearance of the out-buildings and the well-cultivated grounds adjoining, betokened a considerable degree of thrift and comfort in the circumstances of the owner.

Towards night on a beautiul summer's day, at the time we have chosen for the opening of our tale, a young man and maiden might be seen leaving the door of the cottage we have described, and leisurely taking their way across the pasture in a direction to intersect the main road at the termination of the clearing on the south. The first named of this couple, apparently of the age of about twenty-five, was in the full bloom of vigorous manhood. His hardy, robust, and well-formed frame was graced with an open, frank, and highly intelligent countenance, indicative at once of an ingenuous disposition, a light heart, and the consciousness of a strong hand, with mental capacity to govern and render it available—exhibiting in his person a fine sample of the early immigrants of Vermont, who were almost universally men of uncommon physical powers, and generally of moral qualities which quailed at no ordinary obstacles —a fact attributable, probably, neither to chance nor the peculiarly invigorating effects of their climate, but to the natural operation of these very powers and qualities themselves, which only could incite them to forsake the ease and comfort of an old settlement, with the certainty of encountering hardships in a new one, and enduring trials from which men of common mould would shrink with dismay. His fair companion was evidently quite youthful. Her person was rather slightly formed, but of closely knit and beautifully rounded proportions, which were indebted for their almost faultless symmetry to none of the crippling arts or fashion, but solely to the hand of unrestrained nature, giving a free and graceful motion, and a step as light and agile as that of the young fawn of the mountains among which she was reared. The complexion of her face, however, was perhaps too dark to be delicate, or to give full effect to the rich brown tresses that encircled her high forehead, and fell profusely in natural ringlets down her finely arched neck. And her features also, though regular, were remarkable only for the wonderful vivacity of their expression; though now, as she and her companion pursued their way from the house some rods in silence, her mind seemed absent, or absorbed by some care, her looks were quiescent and listless, and her dark blue eyes seemed sleeping in abstraction; but now her lover spoke, and a thousand variant emotions came flitting over her countenance, a smile of peculiar sweetness played on her lips, her cheeks were wreathed in dimples, and her eyes fairly sparkled with a light of the soul that seemed at the instant to have taken perch within them:—

"May," said he, "May, my girl, do you know that I have invited you out for this little walk only to bid you adieu, and that too for a considerable season?"

"No, surely!" replied the girl, pausing in her step, and looking up into the manly features of her lover with an expression of lively concern, "surely you are not going your journey so soon?"

"Yes, May, I have a horse in readiness at the village below, and thither I propose walking to-night, to be prepared for an early start for Massachusetts in the morning."

"And how soon will you return?"

Perhaps I may be absent nearly two months."

"So very long?"

"Most probably—my business is such as may lead to delays—but why so concerned, May? This one more absence and then——"

"Yes, yes, I know what you would say; but why is even this absence necessary?"

"It is but right that you should know, May, and I will tell you. It is now nearly a year since I contracted for the land on which I made a pitch in this settlement. The time for a payment, when I am to receive a title, has nearly arrived; and I am going to gather up the little pittance of property which I earned with my own hands, and left invested in my native state, when I departed for the wild woods of Vermont, and which I now need to enable me to meet this payment."

"It is right then, I presume, that you go, but yet I dread your absence."

"Dread! I hardly dared hope that my presence was so much valued, May."

"How vain now!—no, no, I did mean that—I have other reasons for dreading your absence."

"And what can they be, dearest May?"

"I have often thought I would never disturb your feelings by the story of my little troubles."

"Troubles! and not tell me, May—you surprise and disturb me already—to whom should you confide them, if not to me?"

"True, Mr Ashley, true, if you take the interest in me which you profess—to you certainly, if to any one, would I confide them. And indeed should anything happen to me in your absence in consequence of their existence, I should wish, perhaps, I had apprized you of the difficulties which beset me——"

"O tell me, tell me, May."

"I will. You already know that Mr and Mrs Martin, with whom I have lived from a small child, are not my father and mother by relationship, and I am sorry to say they are not more so by their treatment—often, too often, have they made me to feel that I am the child of other parents."

"Why, surely you never even hinted such a thing before, and I never suspected anything of the kind. They certainly have appeared sufficiently kind to you in my presence."

"O yes, in your presence; and even when you are in the neighbourhood they are more cautious in their cruelty, but as soon as you are fairly out of the settlement for any considerable absence, I soon am made aware of it by other means than the void of my feelings at the loss of your society. You have been told of a pedlar who undertook to be my suitor the year before you came here. That was their work; and I never shall forget their meanness in trying to unite me to that vagabond—to get me out of the country as I have often thought."

"But what reason can they have for such a treatment, and in what manner is it exercised?"

"I am not sensible of ever having given them any cause, and I cannot even guess at the reason. As regards the manner, it is no personal violence that I complain of; but is it much less painful to be insulted, despised—to see, know, and be made to feel that I am hated?"

"No, May, no. This is indeed news to me, but it must not, shall not be. I will this moment return and see them, and secure you a kinder treatment, or, as sure as my name is William Ashley, their house this day ceases to be your home"

Oh no! not for the world! not a step, not a word—if you love me, not a word to them of what I have told you. I would not leave them at this late period—I can bear with them a few months longer, and then—and then, who knows," she continued hesitating and blushing as she dashed aside the tear that had gathered in her eye at the recital of her wrongs, and looked up archly to her lover, "who knows whether I am then to find a better home?"

"Who knows? Ah, May, let the time for proving this but arrive; for, by all that is true and sacred in honour or in love, I swear——"

"O no, no, no!" interrupted the girl with returning vivacity, and with that playful tact with which woman so well knows how to quell the storm she has raised in the less versatile bosom of man, "O no, no, don't swear at me—I have enough of that at home."

The lovers, having now arrived at the end of their walk, seated themselves amidst a cluster of low evergreens on the brink of a high bank to indulge awhile, before the final adieu, in that luxury of love, the interchange of the mutual pledges of affection on the eve of separation. The scenery of the spot was well calculated to enhance the natural interest of the moment, and hallow it to their feelings. Some twenty or thirty feet below, and almost directly under their feet, the road, just emerging from the woods, wound along on a scanty jut or shelf of the hill-side, which immediately beyond formed a lofty precipice terminating in the stream, that rushed in stifled murmurs swiftly down its rugged channel, deeply embowered in the overhanging forest beneath. The cool spray, stealing through the dark foliage of the lofty fir and spruce, whose roots were grasping the rocky margin of the stream a hundred feet below, and whose wavy attenuated tops now seemed almost within the reach of the hand, was visibly rising athwart the bright pencils of the struggling sunbeams in glittering vibrations to the heavens, and with grateful freshness came mingling on the senses with the balmy odour of the birch and gilead, while the seemingly low encircling firmament canopied their heads with that deep and rich cerulean so peculiar to the woody glens of the Green Mountains; and all around and above them was breathing a purity, and shedding a tranquil brightness beautifully

emblematical alike of the innocent and unalloyed affections of their gushing hearts, and their sunny anticipations of the future.

Their enjoyment of these happy moments, however, was soon to be interrupted. Their attention was now arrested by the sounds of clattering hoofs in the road below; and turning their eyes to the spot from whence the noise proceeded, they beheld a single horseman urging, with cruel applications of the whip, his faltering steed up the hill towards the settlement. When nearly opposite, or rather under the spot where our lovers sat concealed from view by the boughs of their covert, the horse paused, staggered an instant, and fell with his rider to the ground. The poor animal, after a few convulsive flounderings, gasped feebly, and died on the spot. "Damn the luck!" exclaimed the traveller, giving the dead carcass two or three spiteful kicks, "damn the luck, the horse is dead! However," he continued, after a short pause occupied in taking a hasty glance up and down the road, and then over the precipices, "however, dead horses, like dead men, will tell no tales—that is, if well buried. And here's grave enough down this bottomless gulf in all conscience, I should think—so now for a speedy funeral." So saying, and hastily unlacing a small valise attached to the crupper of the somewhat tattered saddle, and filled apparently with clothing, he grappled with main strength the body of the horse, and rolled it off the precipice, down the steep side of which it was heard heavily bounding through briars, bushes, and fallen tree tops, till it struck with a faint splash in the water below. With another rapid glance thrown cautiously around him, he took his valise under his arm, and proceeded leisurely on towards the settlement.

"I am so glad he is gone, and without discovering us!" half audibly exclaimed May, the first to rouse from the mute surprise with which they had witnessed the whole transaction that so suddenly came and terminated, like the detached scene of some panoramic exhibition passing quickly before them. "I can breathe again now. How strangely he talked to himself! Don't you think his conduct very singular?"

"Singular enough!" replied Ashley, "but he really displayed some cool philosophy in the death and burial of his horse, as he termed tumbling him down the gulf."

"Who and what can he be?"

"I am puzzled to conjecture. But I am inclined to believe him some watched smuggler who was riding for life to meet and secret some goods he may have coming in this direction. These gentry often take this back road for their excursions, I am told."

"It may be so, but I did not like his appearance any better than his actions; how suspiciously he looked round to discover if any one was in sight! And how cruel to beat his horse so, and then kick the poor creature as he was dying!"

"Nor did I like the appearance of the fellow at all, and I confess I am not quite satisfied with my own solution of the affair; but I have no further leisure at present to bestow in useless conjectures—perhaps one or both of us may learn more hereafter that will throw light on the subject. And now, May, my dearest May, I must go, leaving you to return to the house alone."

"O, not yet."

"Indeed and indeed I must linger no longer—see! the sun is nearly to the mountains. But once more, May, do you love me?"

"O too much!"

"And will be true?"

"For ever!"

"Then, dearest girl, may the great one above us preserve you—farewell, farewell!"

"Farewell!" sighed the tearful girl in accents soft and broken as the dying murmur of the distant cascade with which they mingled on the air. An instant, and Ashley stood in the road below giving the last lingering look of parting,—another, and he had disappeared from the sight of his sorrowful companion, who slowly and pensively pursued her lonely way back to her now more than ever, dreary and joyless home at the cottage we have already described.

CHAPTER II.

The owner of the cottage, as the reader is already apprised, was a Mr Martin, who with a few others had made, many years before, the first permanent settlement in the valley. They had purchased of one Colvin, a resident of the small village to which allusion has before been made, situated some six or eight miles below, in the southerly corner of what had now become an organized town, embracing the greatest part of this settlement within its boundaries. This man had formerly acted as agent to Harwood, the original proprietor of the whole valley, in disposing of the same lands to others which he subsequently sold to Martin and his companions as principal, the first occupants becoming sick of their bargains, or proving too poor and thriftless to pay for their farms, having abandoned and left them before receiving any but defeasaible titles, with their few scanty improvements, to more able and enterprising successors. About the time of this desertion of the first settlers, or rather squatters, perhaps, they might be termed, Colvin made a journey to the seaport in New Hampshire where Harwood resided, and returned with the story that he had bought out the original proprietor, and was now sole owner of the valley. He then immediately set to work in searching for purchasers; and by his unwearied exertions in this respect, and the inducements held out by the smallness of his reduced prices, he soon succeeded in finding money purchasers for all the valley thought capable of improvement. This he had no sooner effected than he suddenly left that part of the country, and was heard of no more. From this time the settlement made rapid progress in improvement; and many of the families there now permanently located, among which was that of Martin, were, at that period of our tale, in comparatively easy and comfortable circumstances. Martin and his wife, having no children of their own, had taken May, the heroine of our story, when quite young, and adopted her as a daughter. Of the girl's parentage little or nothing had ever been ascertained. Her mother, it apeared, had been taken ill on the road in a neighbourhood on the borders of New Hampshire, and gained admittance into a private family to remain during her confinement. The man who attended her was not her husband, but, as he stated, a person employed to convey her to her friends in Vermont. And pretending to give her name and residence, and leaving a sum of money with the family amply sufficient for the present support of the mother and her expected infant, he immediately returned, for the purpose, as he avowed, of apprising her husband of her situation. The young woman, for so she seemed, in a few hours gave birth to a daughter; not, however, without the cost of her own life; for she was soon seized with a fever and delirium, which in two or three days put a period to her existence. The infant was handed over to nurse to a married daughter of the family who resided with them, and who kindly received the little stranger to share with her own child that nourishment of which it had been deprived by the untimely death of its mother. After a few weeks had elapsed, no one in the meantime appearing to claim the child, a letter was sent to the address of the supposed father, but without bringing from any one either a visit or an answer. Recourse was then had to the post-master of the town, which had been given as the residence of the husband; and, in consequence, information was soon received that no person or family of that name and description had ever resided there. And as no other intelligence was ever after received on the subject, and neither any remarks of the deceased mother during the few hours of her rationality after her arrival, nor anything found among her effects affording the least clue for unravelling the mystery, the transaction was very naturally concluded to be one of those frauds often practised to palm off as respectable some frail fair one and her illegitimate on strangers. The little innocent subject of these suspicions, thus left unknown and unowned among entire strangers, was not, however, on that account neglected. Having been at first whimsically termed the May flower, and finally May, from the circumstance of her having been born on the first day of the month of that name, she received the kindest attention from the family till nearly two years of age, when, becoming a pretty and promising child, she was taken by Martin, who then, and for some years afterwards, resided in that neighbourhood, from which he removed to his present residence in the valley. During the first years of May's adoption, and till the removal of Martin to Vermont, she was allowed, summer and winter, the advantage of an excellent common school, in which

she was distinguished for uncommon proficiency for her age. And the taste for reading, which she here thus early acquired, was ever after maintained and improved by means of a choice selection of books, which Martin inherited from his father, and preserved out of respect to his memory, rather than for any pleasure or profit they ever afforded him, or his still more unlettered companion. At this period also she was apparently much beloved by both Martin and his wife, and was uniformly treated by them with parental kindness and attention. But as she approached to womanhood, and began to attract the esteem and admiration of all who became acquainted with her by her amiable disposition, her sprightliness, and beauty, this former manifestation of kindness on the part of Martin and his wife began unaccountably to decline; and instead of receiving these demonstrations of esteem towards their deserving daughter with that pride and gratification which real parents would feel, they seemed to sicken at the praises she received, and view them with increasing uneasiness, giving vent to their feelings at last on the innocent and distressed cause of them in such bitterness of manner and expression as to render her often extremely miserable. And this treatment was the more painful and perplexing as it arose from no avowed or reasonable causes, being founded probably in a sense of growing inferiority, and a petty jealousy at the preference with which she was personally regarded, and the greater respect which her intellectual superiority always commanded, leaving her the most hopeless of all tasks—the endeavour to conciliate those whose conduct arises from motives they are ashamed to acknowledge, and whose dislike has no other origin than in the baseness of their own hearts.

A new era now occurred in the life of May—the era of her first love. William Ashley, an intelligent and enterprising young man, had been employed by a gentleman of Massachusetts, owning wild lands in Vermont, to survey the tract lying west of the settlement. Making the valley his head-quarters, and the house of Martin his home on his stated returns from his laborious duties in the woods, he became interested in May, loved her, and was soon loved in return with all the purity and fervour with which a young maiden yields up her virgin affections. The intimacy soon resulted in an engagement of marriage, and a determination on his part to purchase a farm and settle in the valley; to all of which Martin and his wife either seemed coldly indifferent, or manifested their dislike, though, as before intimated, they had the year previous used considerable management to induce May to consent to the hasty proposals of one a thousand times less worthy. Ashley having now contracted for a farm in pursuance of his resolution to settle in the place, his time had since been spent in alternately improving his new purchase, and resuming the avocation which had been the means of introducing him into the settlement.

Having now given the reader a brief sketch of the situation and characters of the leading personages of our little story, we will return to the thread of the narrative where we left it for this digression.

CHAPTER III.

After parting from her lover, May lingered almost unconsciously some time in the vicinity of the romantic spot which had witnessed their adieus, now listlessly stooping to pluck some favourite flower which peeped from its covert beneath her devious footsteps, and now pausing to scratch the initials of the loved one's name on the back of some solitary tree, while her mind was sweetly occupied with the pleasant reminiscences of the past, or indulging in those dreamy and bright imaginings of the future, which love and hope are for ever uniting to create in the bosoms of the youthful. And it was nearly sunset before she was aroused to the necessity of a speedy return to her home. Now quickening her steps, however, she soon arrived at the door, and was timidly entering under the expectation of receiving some ill-natured reprimand from Martin or his wife, as was their wont on her being long absent from her domestic duties, when, with a feeling approaching thankfulness, she caught a glance of a third person in the room, whom she took to be some neighbour, sitting with his back towards her, thinking that his presence would protect her from the anticipated rebuke till the occasion should be forgotten. But this penalty she would have gladly suffered the next moment in exchange for the disagreeable surprise she encountered; for she had scarcely reached the interior of the room before the person turned round, and in him she at once recognized the man whose singular conduct she and Ashley had lately witnessed with so much surprise

and suspicion. She instantly recoiled at the unexpected discovery, and stood a moment mute and abashed before the painful scrutiny of his gaze.

"Why, what ails the girl!" exclaimed Mrs Martin. "A body would think she was afraid of strangers."

"Perhaps, wife," observed Martin with a malicious smile, "perhaps May's walk has confused her wits a little—these love-meetings and love-partings are terrible things to fluster one, ain't they, May?"

"There!" rejoined the former, in a tone of exulting glee, "there! see how the girl blushes! I guess she thinks the gentleman may have seen her and her beau in their loving ramble across the pasture.—May be, sir," she continued, turning to the stranger, "may be you witnessed the parting?"

"No, I saw no one after leaving the woods till I reached the house," replied the man with evident uneasiness of manner—"Did you pass the way I came, Miss?"

"I have not been in the road, sir," answered May, with as much calmness as she could command in her fresh alarm at the turn which the conversation now threatened to take, accompanied as the question was with a tone and look of suspicion for which she could readily account. The inquiry, however, to her great relief, was pursued no further, and, the conversation being now directed to other and indifferent subjects, she retreated from the room to hide her blushes, and shed tears of vexation at the unfeeling and wanton manner in which the secrets of her heart had been exposed to a stranger; and that stranger, too, the very one of all others before whom she would have been most anxious to avoid such an exposure, coupled as it had been with her walk, which had put her in possession of an unpleasant secret, as she feared it was, respecting him. How unlucky! she thought. Perhaps even now she had become the object of his suspicion and dislike. She had intended, before so unexpectedly encountering him on her return, to make known the transaction she had witnessed. But now should she do so, and the affair should be satisfactorily explained, she dreaded the ridicule which she probably must experience from all parties for having acted the spy and eavesdropper; and should it lead to the detection of some villany, perhaps she would have to be called into court as a witness—a consequence which she no less dreaded. She concluded, therefore, to keep the whole transaction carefully locked as a secret in her own bosom. Having come to this determination, and having succeeded by this time in allaying her disturbed feelings, and in assuming, in a good degree, a calm demeanor, she rejoined the company, her repugnance to the stranger being mingled with some curiosity to learn more of his character, and see whether he would mention the circumstance which had so unfavourably impressed her and her lover, and if so, in what manner he would explain it. But in this she was disappointed, as not the least allusion was then, or ever afterwards, made by him to the transaction. May soon perceived, however, that the stranger had already made rapid progress with his host and hostess towards gaining the footing of a familiar acquaintance; and it was with some surprise that she learned that he was to become, for the present, an inmate in the family. He had introduced himself, it appeared, by the name of Gow, stating that he was travelling with the view of purchasing lands; and having heard that Harwood settlement presented good inducements to purchasers, he had now accordingly paid it a visit for this purpose. This avowal had led to a proffer of assistance on the part of Martin to further the objects of the stranger, and soon to a compliance with the request of the latter to take up his abode in the family while he remained in the place. Such was the ostensible object of the stranger's visit. This information May gathered from her mother in the absence of the gentlemen, who after supper had taken a long ramble across the farm in the twilight of the delicious evening. But the truth of the account which the man had thus given of himself she felt much disposed to discredit, for though the story was simple and reasonable enough in itself, she yet was wholly unable to reconcile it in her mind with what she had witnessed; and the more she reflected on the subject the stronger became her suspicions that there was something wrong in his character, and something he was making an effort to conceal. During the course of the evening May found frequent opportunities for examining the personal appearance of Gow (for by that name we shall now call him) more closely than she had before the means of doing. Though young, he was evidently considerably hackneyed in the ways of the world, and seemed well versed in the ordinary modes of flattery, and the art of insinuating himself into the good

graces of strangers. His exterior was good, and his demeanor, with ordinary observers, might have been prepossessing: but those who scrutinized him more closely might easily have detected a hollowness in his manner, which showed that the heart was taking but little part in the wheedling language of the tongue, and a sort of questionable expression in the glances of his restless eye, which, like the savage foe in the woods, seemed to avoid open encounter, and to be continually skulking away and back, under the steady gaze of the beholder, as if guarding hidden motives with a constant apprehensiveness of their detection. Such, at least, were the impressions of May, whose scrutiny, instead of lessening, had now increased the dislike she had conceived towards this person. Besides, she was not altogether pleased with his manner toward herself. It was evident, from his remarks, that his inquiries concerning her had been already very particular; and he seemed to address her with too much of the air of an old acquaintance. In short, she felt—she scarce knew why—that he had some preconcerted object in view some way connected with herself. And she retired to rest that night with sensations of displeasure, and with a disquietude of feeling that she had never before experienced.

While such thoughts and undefined apprehensions were agitating the guileless bosom of May, the disagreeable object of her reflections was occupied in another apartment, to which he also had retired for the night, in writing a letter to an absent associate. For the benefit of the reader, we take an author's privilege of looking over his shoulder.

"Well, Colonel, here I am, snug at Martin's, where I am to remain at present gentleman land-looker, as I call myself, till I put other business in train. I arrived this afternoon, sooner by some days than I expected, having come not slow most of the way, I assure you. The honest fact is, I bought a horse at the end of the first day's journey. 'Bought!' you will say. Yes, of an old white cow I run fowl of in the stable. 'What a madcap!' you will again exclaim, 'thus to endander the success of our honest speculation.' But the fact was, Colonel, I was getting on too slow for my disposition, and—and I could not help it. But the animal fell down and died just as I was coming into the settlement; and I rolled him off a ledge into the brook, where he won't enjoy much more society, I am thinking, but the fishes and foxes, till he is pretty well distributed. So no danger from that little frolic. Now for the girl—she is here, and no common affair neither, I can assure you. Well formed, handsome, and knowing; indeed, I fear me she knows rather too much—at least, that soul-reading sort of look of hers I plainly see will require a pretty thick mask. Besides, Martin tells me she is engaged to a young farmer, lately settled here, but who luckily started a journey for two months just before I arrived. So you see I have got to push matters rather briskly, and it will be a hard case if she don't find herself Mrs Gow before the fellow returns. Lord! if she but knew her own secret or mine, I might as well try to catch a lark in the sky by whistling.

"As to the other part of our projected scheme, I am sure it will work well. Martin, whom, in my rapid way of doing things, I have sounded in all shapes, informs me, that it is generally believed here that precious metals lie hid in these mountains; and I have already hinted my natural faculties in seeing in the magic stone* (the wonders of which, I find, are still believed in among them), and in working the divining rods. Both of these marvellous implements I shall naturally find in a day or two probably, when I shall open the golden prospect to Martin's greedy eyes, and if it takes, as we may safely swear it will, I shall commence operations immediately. So, old boy, you may come on with your traps as soon as you receive this, for I shall want you at all events; I will look out the old cave you described in the mountains, and have all things in readiness by the time you arrive.

"Yours in rascality, truly,

"Gow."

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* The belief that there was a peculiar kind of stone in which certain individuals had the faculty of discovering hidden things by directing their thoughts to them, formerly existed to a considerable extent in many parts of Vermont.

CHAPTER IV.

The next day was spent by Martin and his new acquaintance in the woods, the former acting as guide, as they rambled over the adjacent tracts of wild land in furtherance of the professed object of the latter's sojourn in the valley. The next, and the next, found them engaged in the same employment, to the great wonderment of May, who, knowing from the course taken by them, and from their returns to their daily meal at noon, that their excursions were always short and in the same direction, could not understand the use of so much exploring for a general examination of a few lots of land. She was also led to notice that a deep intimacy was growing between them; and she soon perceived that they were engaged in some secret purpose far different from that by which they pretended to be occupied. Gow affected, in the presence of the family, a knowing silence on the subject of their employment, and frequently pretended to check his friend as the latter began to throw out hints about new houses, improvements, and purchases, implying a sudden change in his circumstances. All this, however, would have but little interested our heroine, and might have passed unheeded by her, had she not motives of her own for watching the conduct of Gow, whose character from the first she had so much reason to regard with suspicion, and whose increasing attentions to herself, which could now no longer be mistaken for ordinary courtesy, and which grew every day more and more annoying, furnished her additional reasons for wishing to fathom his designs.

But it is time, perhaps, to apprise the reader more fully of the project in which Gow had enlisted Martin.

At the foot of a lofty mountain in the woods, about a mile north-westerly of Martin's house, a few days after Gow's arrival, these two personages might be seen seated on a fallen tree, the one with his face protruded into his hat, which he held in his lap, seemingly gazing at something at the bottom, while the other was attentively listening to the remarks which, at intervals, fell from the former. The dialogue which now ensued between them will sufficiently explain the nature of their employment.

"Are you quite certain, Mr Gow, that you have at last found the real genuine sort of stone, which you have this wonderful faculty of seeing things in?"

"O, quite sure. It is the same thin, oval, yellow, speckled kind of stone I used when I discovered the pot of money on Cape Cod, that they supposed Kidd buried there. How provoking to get only a hundred dollars for that job, when I might have gone shares with the men who employed me had I chosen it! But the fact was, Martin, I was not at that time entirely certain that I possessed this faculty to so great an extent as I afterwards found."

"But what can be the reason that you cannot see in the stone at one time as well as another?"

"No one can exactly tell. A friend of mine who has the faculty, and is deeply skilled in these matters, supposes it is the devil that casts a mist before the stone to hide what otherwise might be discovered, and this may be the case, or it is possible that it may have some connection with the weather or state of the air. I had a beautiful clear view the first time I tried the stone after finding it this morning, but as my mind was running on scenes in my own country, I made no discoveries of anything hereabouts, for the view had faded away before I could turn my thoughts to the spot. One must keep his mind intently fixed on what he expects to discover, and wait with patience till the stone clears, and then if there is anything to be found, he will be sure to see it, and all the objects by which it is surrounded."

"How wonderful! By heavens, if I only had the faculty, I——"

"Hush—hush—Martin, it begins to clear."

"Does it? Mind and keep your thoughts on the mountain, Gow. Do you see anything yet?"

"Nothing distinctly yet—nothing but woods, and high hills with light misty clouds resting on them in broken masses, which seem to be dividing and slowly moving off. Stay! what peak is that which rises in sight? Zounds! Martin, it clears every instant; and I can plainly distinguish the very mountain we are under. Look along the top of the ridge towards the north. Now see if you discover a tall dry tree—pine, I should think—standing just above a bare rock."

"Yes, there is the very tree, as I live, and the rock too, by Jupiter! But do you see anything else?"

"Be easy a moment—I just caught a glance of something glimmering further down—but it appears to be gone now. There! I have it again right below the tree; but down, down to the very foot of the mountain. Now it comes!—brighter than ever! Something of a white shining appearance. Silver! silver! Martin,—as true as I am a sinner—coined dollars of silver, deep underground!"

"Oh heavens and earth!" exclaimed Martin, leaping up and rubbing his hands in ecstacy; "but mark the spot, Gow, where it lies."

"I have," replied the other, taking his face from his hat; "the view has all died away now, and I shall not probably get another at this time. But what a glorious sight! Oh, my stars, if you could have seen it! The first day we were out here, when I strayed from you, as you remember I did, I cut and tried a divining rod, and from the working of it in my hand I became satisfied that there was a treasure near this mountain, as I afterwards hinted to you, but I certainly never dreamed of such a mint of coined money. But come, let us go to the spot, and put some private marks on the trees as near the place as we can hit by guess."

So saying, Gow pocketed his magic speculum, and hastily setting out for the place just designated as the spot where the treasure lay concealed, they soon came opposite to the tall tree and rock before mentioned, and halted close to the foot of the mountain.

"There! exclaimed Gow, looking round and measuring the spot with his eye, "there! Martin, within the compass of one acre around us, I will stake my life, there lie buried beneath the ground more than ten thousand hard dollars; but," he continued with a look of mysterious gravity, "but it may require much time and labour to find it, and we may have to fight dead men and devils before we get fairly hold of it."

"I will agree to fight both to their teeth, to get hold of a tenth part of that sum!" cried the other in boastful rapture.

"Well, then," said Gow, "we will now begin to think of the project in good earnest. But as it will take much hard digging probably to reach the treasure—more, doubtless, than we with our single hands can ever expect to do, we shall be compelled to form a small company of four or five trusty individuals besides ourselves, and then we shall be able to do business to some effect."

"Why, yes, but cannot we get along without this?" said the avaricious Martin. "We might then have all the money to ourselves."

"Ay, ay, if we could, and that were all, but you must know that there are some conditions to be complied with in this business; for besides their labour, which we shall need, you forget that I cannot exercise my skill in making you rich for nothing; and you will be hardly willing or able alone to raise the sum I shall make you agree to give me before I go on."

"How much?" asked the other, with symptoms of alarm.

"Not less than five hundred dollars."

"What! five hundred dollars, and go shares too?"

"Exactly. If I only went shares, what should I get for my skill?"

"Yes, but five hundred dollars! it is extortion, Gow, rank extortion! and I won't give it—I will go alone first."

"Go on, then," said Gow, with a cool sneer, "and we will see how much you will make by money digging without me."

"I did not mean any offence, Mr Gow," rejoined Martin, in an apologetic tone, seeing the determined manner of the other, and fearful of pushing matters too far with him; "I meant no sort of offence, but how can I raise such a sum?"

"True," said Gow, "I knew you could not, and therefore had an additional reason for proposing to form a company; and this we must do—one hundred dollars a-piece will then be all that's required."

"And one hundred is more than I know how to raise," observed Martin despondingly.

"I shall be fair with the company," said the other, without seeming to heed the last remark of Martin. "I shall be honourable, and to show them that there is no deception in the *business, I will not* require them to hand over the money till the first dollar of the treasure is

found; and then, before the treasure is opened, they must have it in readiness to pay over on the spot, and let me go equal shares in all that is found. These will be my conditions."

"Well, I don't see why that is not all fair."

"And hark'ee, friend Martin, there is one way by which I might perhaps let you off from paying the hundred dollars, or even anything—if I thought—if——"

"If what?" eagerly asked the other; "if there is such a chance for me, for heaven's sake let me know it—anything that I can do——"

"Yes, yes, Martin, but there is the trouble, perhaps, for I fear you cannot do me the favour I was thinking of, if you would, and I don't know that I ought to ask your interference; but I can name the case, and then you can tell me, if you please, what your notions are on the subject. You may have already perceived, perhaps, that I have taken a fancy to your adopted daughter, May Martin——"

"Why, yes, but what do you want of her? It would give me a bad name if I should have any hand in——"

"O, you quite mistake my intentions; as I said I have taken a fancy to the girl, and I have made up my mind, even on our short acquaintance, to make a wife of her, if she will marry me; but she appears to be shy, and I suspect is determined to refuse any offers I may make her. Now, if, in this business, you feel disposed to assist me——"

"O, if that is all, I will use all my influence to persuade her to accept your offer."

"Yes, that you of course would do, if you felt disposed to favour my suit. But can't you so manage as to warrant my success? Now what I was going to say was this, if you will ensure me the girl, I will release you from paying me a cent in this affair, that is, if you will bring it about within a month."

"A month! that is a short time; why such haste?"

"Why, it is always my way to do things at a dash. I may as well marry now as ever; and I trust we shall reach the treasure by that time at least, when you otherwise would have to pay me over the money."

"True, I had forgotten that. Well, we will see what can be done; but how on earth to bring it about, I know not. She is engaged to Ashley, and no doubt is determined to marry him, let who will come; and he too is a bold, straight-going fellow, who would not stand aside for a regiment."

"But he is absent."

"Yes, and that is lucky so far. If she could be weaned from him before his return, and she did not write to bring him back upon us——"

"O, the last can be managed; but will he write to her?"

"I presume so, but why that question?"

"I merely ask out of curiosity. But who brings her letters from the village; where they come, I suppose?"

"I shall, probably, myself—why?"

"Now suppose you should withhold the letter, and never let her know any had come for her?"

"That might have effect in making her think she was neglected, perhaps."

"And supposing you should let me take the letter and write her one in imitation of his hand, signing his name, and let you give it to her?"

"Yes, but there would be no cheating her in this way, she is keen as a razor; I have sometimes thought she could tell my very thoughts, the prying hussy!"

"But I could cheat her though. I am handy with the pen, and could once imitate any hand, so that the writer himself could not tell which was his own."

"That would be rather roguish, would it not, Gow? Besides, when Ashley returned, he would raise Ned with you for such a trick."

"Why, I should calculate to make you a rich man, take the girl, and be off to my own country long before he came back. But I see you are not disposed to help me and yourself in this business——"

"O, you are mistaken; I was only contriving, and I beging to think we can manage it; and if you intend to take her out of the country, wife will lend a stiff hand, depend on't. She thinks May is quite too knowing, considering, and will soon get above us all; and to tell the

truth, I have lately had a sort of a notion that the girl would bring some bad luck to us in one shape or other. But take her away from this place, and she will make a smart wife enough, I dare say. Gow, she shall be yours by hook or by crook, and there's my hand on it."

This last point being settled to the mutual satisfaction of these worthy personages, they then proceeded to discuss and settle the details of the plan of operations proposed by Gow for coming at the buried treasure; the result of which was, that Martin should take upon himself the task of forming a company from such of his neighbours as he should select as most trusty and best fitted for the enterprise. The work was to be commenced as soon as a company could be formed; to be carried on in the night, and with all possible secrecy. Gow was to superintend and direct the whole business. And for the purpose, as he told Martin, of guarding the spot, and always being near to catch every view which was to be had from his magic stone, and of making frequent trials of the divining rod, he was to erect a shantee on some part of the mountain above, for his chief residence, till the treasure was found, where no one was to presume, on any account, to approach him, pretending that he could only make his discoveries to any advantage when entirely alone. Here he was to be supplied with provisions, &c., from Martin's house, to which he should only repair for the purpose of prosecuting his suit with May. Their whole plan being thus adjusted, they returned to the house with the understanding that each should proceed to his allotted part on the following morning.

CHAPTER V.

From this time every means was tried, and every art put in requisition, by Martin and his wife, to forward the projected match between Gow and their adopted daughter. Their first attempts were confined to endeavours to impress her with favourable sentiments towards her new lover, and, at the same time, to prejudice her mind against Ashley, and destroy the high estimation in which they well knew she deservedly held him. But not long resting satisfied with their progress in this indirect method of accomplishing their base purpose, they soon proceeded to open importunities, using every persuasion to induce her to yield to their wish, and exhausting every argument their ingenuity could invent, which they thought likely to shake her still unaltered purpose of fidelity to her betrothed lover, and turn her mind to the man of their worse than mercenary choice. Sometimes setting before her glowing pictures of the wealth and splendour to be gained by an union with Gow, and then contrasting this with the life of labour and obscurity which they told her must be her certain lot if she married Ashley; sometimes resorting to flattery, followed by abject entreaties, and sometimes to menaces and bitter denunciations in case she finally refused to comply with their wishes and commands; till the poor girl felt as if she must sink under their united persecution. With the object of this unwearied intercession, himself, she succeeded much easier in securing herself from annoyance. He had by this time proposed himself in direct terms, and had received a decided and unqualified refusal; and the simple majesty of innocence and virtuous rectitude of purpose, unprotected and discountenanced as they were on all sides conveyed a rebuke before which, with all his assurance, he could not help quailing; and he shrank from the cold dignity of her presence, leaving her mostly unmolested by open attempts to soften her obduracy, choosing rather to rely on intrigue and deception to effect a design which he was well aware any manly or honourable course would fail of accomplishing. But this new and unexpected attempt of Martin and his wife, situated as she was, to control her inclination and induce her to violate her plighted faith, was much less easily combated, and doubly enhanced her distress and perplexity. Their motives for this cruel conduct, she soon rightly conjectured, must arise from some advantage to be gained by the success of their endeavours—some tempting condition by which Gow had bribed them; but why any such advantage or bribe should be offered by the latter, she was wholly at a loss to imagine. She felt satisfied that his anxiety to obtain her hand did not proceed from any love which he had so hastily entertained for her, and much less could it arise, she thought, from any pecuniary or other advantage to be gained by marrying a pennyless and obscure orphan. But that *was his determined* purpose, she could no longer doubt, and it was equally clear to her

that her parents were closely leagued with him in the design. The neighbours, too, it was apparent, from their jokes and indirect advice to her, in their intercourse with the family, had been biased by the account which they had received of the new comer, and had already arrayed themselves on his side, and stood ready to advocate his cause. While the reluctance she had conceived to divulge what she knew of him, or to say aught to his disadvantage as long as he was a favoured inmate of her family, mingled with a delicacy of feeling, forbidding her to discuss the character of an avowed lover, all combined to prevent her from trying to undeceive her acquaintance in their opinion of Gow, or to make known to any one the wretchedness and difficulty of her situation. And had she attempted this, and made known her difficulty, she knew not that it would avail in changing the popular current which she saw was now setting in favour of Gow, or in alleviating her embarrassments; she resolved therefore to endure in silence, and, though alone and unfriended, to persevere in her unshaken determination of resistance, till the return of Ashley should put an end to her sorrows and troubles.

"What great object do you propose to gain, May," said Martin one day during this ceaseless warfare against the peace and happiness of the persecuted girl — "what great object do you propose to gain by rejecting such a man as Mr Gow, and accepting such a fellow as Ashley?"

"I shall at least gain the approbation of my own conscience, father; for I have promised him solemnly, and he told me that he had your consent."

"I might have said something of the kind, perhaps, when I supposed you could do no better; but these foolish promises which boys and girls make to each other,—what do they amount to? And how long does either party hesitate about breaking them when, finding they can do better with themselves, they wish to make another choice?"

"But I have no wish to make another choice, and if I had, I hardly think I should gain much by the change you propose."

"You don't pretend to compare Ashley to Mr. Gow, do you?"

"Certainly, I should not wish to compare him to this suspicious man——"

"What do you mean, girl? Would you insinuate anything against the character of Mr Gow—a gentleman, and a friend of mine as he is?"

"I do not wish to say anything about him; but friend or gentleman as you may believe him, you would be much better employed, I suspect, in guarding yourself against his arts, than in trying to drive a poor friendless and unprotected girl into his clutches."

"What mean you, May Martin, once more I ask?" sternly demanded he, stamping on the floor. "What reasons for your scandalous insinuations can you give?—Speak—tell them if you have any. No wonder you hesitate, for you have none to give—'tis all but a foolish stubborn girl's whim—prejudice against a man who loves you, but who is too good for you, and condescends too much in wishing to make you rich and happy. I tell you, girl, you must marry him."

"O, I cannot, father—never, never!"

"You won't then, will you? You forget that you are not of age yet, and that I have an indenture in that desk that puts you completely under my control?"

"I forget nothing, sir. I know my duty, and have always endeavoured to do it, and can you say as much respecting the cruel course you are now pursuing towards me? Does that paper to which you so insultingly allude, give you the power to dispose of me in marriage without my consent, and against my inclinations?"

"Hush, impudent!" vociferated Martin, again stamping with rage. "A lecture on my duty, hey? Fine times I should think!"

"May don't remember," chimed in Mrs Martin, with a spiteful leer and taunting tone, "May don't remember who took her when she was a little ragged outcast, that no father would come to own, and fed, clothed, and educated her, and gave her a respectable home?"

"O, I have—I do remember it!" said May, bursting into tears, "I remember it all, and would to heaven I could think of those days of kindness without associating them with later treatment—with this, this bitter hour of insult and cruelty."

"Come, come, you silly girl," said Martin, after waiting till her paroxysm had a little sub-

sided; and now changing his manner into a half coaxing, half expostulating tone; "come, come, May, I did not mean to hurt your feelings—I do not wish you to do anything but what I think is for your good. You yourself will be as ready to marry Mr Gow as you are now opposed to it, as soon as you find that Ashley has left you for another sweetheart."

"Ashley?" said May, slowly taking her handkerchief from her tear-bathed face, and looking at Martin with an air of mingled surprise and censure, "Mr Ashley will never do that."

"Pshaw! nothing more likely," responded Martin, carelessly. "You don't know William Ashley so well as I do."

"Well enough, however," replied May promptly, "to know that he will never do that—any sooner than I should voluntarily leave him for your Mr Gow."

"You would hardly dare promise to marry Mr. Gow on condition of Ashley's desertion, I suspect?"

"Indeed I should, sir."

"Well, let us have your promise then."

"I fear not to do it, sir, on that condition," rejoined May, in a tone of unsuspecting confidence, "and if such a promise will relieve me from any more persecution and teasing to marry Gow till Mr Ashley is false to me, I will make it."

"Well," observed Martin, with a well feigned air of indifference, "I will take you at your word. I suppose we must submit to the condition, though I still say we do not wish to force your inclinations, only so far as we know is for your own interest. And now, you have made this promise, May, I hope you will think, should this condition be fulfilled, that it is as wicked to break it as you now do to break your promise to Ashley." So saying, and with a treacherous smile on his countenance, he left the room.

May marvelled much at the unexpected termination of the dialogue which had begun so differently, and threatened so different an ending; and, after Martin had retired, she endeavoured to draw something from his wife which would go to explain her husband's sudden apparent willingness to drop his purpose for a promise made on a condition which she felt so confident could never happen. But that dame, who was naturally taciturn and cautious, and who rarely ever betrayed the secrets of her heart with her tongue, while her cold, severe, and unvarying countenance was generally equally proof against all scrutiny on what was passing within, pretended to know nothing of the affair, and, after a few unsatisfactory replies, sunk into her usual foreboding silence. Our heroine, therefore, being left to her own conjectures, and notwithstanding she felt some little misgiving relative to her promise, and an undefined suspicion that there was something wrong about it, seeing, nevertheless, no reason why it should be different from what the circumstances purported, could not but congratulate herself on the prospect now presented, of a reprieve from her persecutions; and, the latter feeling prevailing, she dismissed the subject from her mind, and resumed her domestic occupations with a cheerfulness to which she had some time been a stranger.

CHAPTER VI.

For nearly a week from the interview just narrated, no allusion was made in the presence of May to the dreaded subject of a marriage with Gow; and, in the respite thus allowed her, she began to hope that her peace would no more be disturbed by any further recurrence of those scenes which had lately caused her so much distress and perplexity. And this hope, added to the cheering expectation she now daily entertained of receiving a letter from Ashley, imparted a new impulse to her feelings, and was fast obliterating the remembrance of her late trials from her mind. But this happy quiet was not long to continue; and, like the deceitful calm of the elements, which often precedes the fearful tempest, soon proved to be but the prelude to new and aggravated sorrows.

"May," said Mrs Martin one day, as glancing through the window she saw her husband approaching the house in company with Gow, "May, did Mr Martin bring you any letter yesterday from the village?"

"Any letter!" replied May in surprise; "bring me a letter! no; did he go to the village yesterday? I knew nothing of it."

"Yes, he went," said the other with an affected common-place air, "and I thought it likely he might have found a letter for you there by this time—but here he comes himself, and can tell you whether he inquired for one; I'll warrant he did not though, he is such a forgetful creature—say, Mr Martin," she continued, turning to her husband, as he now entered the room, "did you inquire at the post-office yesterday for a letter for May?"

"There now!" exclaimed Martin, with a seeming abashed and self-condemning manner; "well, if that don't beat all! I should not blame May for scolding now; for, of all forgetful fellows I believe I must be the worst. Yes, I did call at the office, and got her a letter from Ashley, I conclude, and here I have carried it in my pocket ever since."

"O, how could you!—but where is it—O, where is it?" eagerly exclaimed the animated girl, starting up and advancing.

"Here!" replied Martin, pulling out the letter and presenting it; "here it is; and now we shall see no more of you till that is read and re-read a dozen times over, I suppose."

As the hungry bird darts upon the luscious grape accidentally revealed to his sight while wandering weary and famished for food, so did May upon the valued prize before her; and scarce was it within her eager grasp before she bore it off, with eyes sparkling with joy and triumph, to another room, there to feast on its anticipated contents, which, in fancy, were to thrill her own bosom with delight, and at the same time to furnish an ample refutation of the unjust and ungenerous surmises of Martin concerning the fidelity of her beloved Ashley. No sooner was she alone than with trembling haste she tore open the seal, and read in the well-known hand of her lover, as she thought, as follows:—

"Miss May Martin,—Knowing you would expect a letter from me about this time, and considering it a duty to apprize you of some changes relative to myself, I have thought best to write you briefly. On my arrival at my old residence I there met with one with whom I once had considerable intimacy, which was broken off by a misunderstanding between us, and I supposed the separation to be final. That misunderstanding is now, however, satisfactorily cleared up, and with a renewal of acquaintance, feelings which, when with you, I supposed dead, have revived. I presume you would not wish to marry a man who entertains a preference to another; I think I know you too well to believe you would for a single moment endure the thought of such a union, and therefore it is extremely doubtful whether I return at all to Vermont. I have luckily found a man here who has taken my land contract in the settlement off my hands. Do not think I shall ever entertain any other feelings towards you than those of sincere friendship and the highest respect.

"William Ashley."

During the perusal of the first part of this unloverlike epistle, the countenance of May exhibited a surprised and disappointed expression, produced seemingly by the formal and unaccustomed introductory address, as well as not meeting with anything she expected to find. But this expression, as she continued, soon changed into a look of blank bewilderment, like that of one utterly at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the writer; and it was not till she reached the concluding line that the painful truth which the writer, with apparent reluctance, seemed impelled by a sense of duty to communicate, flashed for the first time across her mind;—then it was that the ashy paleness of dismay spread over the quivering muscles of her face; and with a hurried, mechanical kind of motion she again commenced reading, trembling more and more violently as she proceeded, till her agitation becoming too great to continue the perusal, she dropped the fatal paper on the table, and, lifting up her hands with a look of utter hopelessness and misery, indistinctly murmured, "Oh! may not this be some dreadful dream from which I shall awake?" And she pressed her hand hard upon the swelling veins of her forehead, as if to recover her consciousness. "No, no," she at length more audibly uttered in a tone of despairing grief, "no, no!—wretched, oh, wretched, lost, wrecked and ruined! and all but heaven has now deserted me." Tears now gushed and fell in a shower from her eyes, and, covering her face with both hands, heart-rending sobs alone gave further utterance to the agony of feeling with which her bursting bosom was labouring.

At this moment Martin, followed by Gow, entered the room.

"Why! what is all this now?" exclaimed the former in affected surprise; "what in the

matter?—what can have happened, May? Oh, something in the letter—but do let us see what dreadful news it contains." So saying, he officiously bustled up to the table where May was sitting in the posture above described with the letter open before her, without moving or offering any resistance to Martin's taking it, and seemed busily to run over the contents. "There!" he presently exclaimed, turning to his friend, "there! this is just what I always expected—that fellow, Ashley, has cast May aside for an old sweetheart, and has had the impudence here to tell her so—though it is scarcely three weeks since he was vowing and cooing round her like all the world. The false-hearted scoundrel! But May had fair warning how the fellow would treat her; and now I hope she will put a proper value on the offers of those who really love her, and are worth a thousand such fellows to boot."

"Yes, May," said Gow in a low soothing tone as he approached and leaned over the table by her side, while Martin, under pretence of further examining the letter, moved off to an opposite window; "yes, May, now this great obstacle to your marrying another is entirely removed, I hope you will no longer refuse to hear my offer."

"Oh, do not torment me," she replied in broken utterance, her face still buried in her hands; "oh, leave me alone, I beseech you."

"May!" interrupted Martin sternly, remember your promise—you recollect—if Ashley deserted you! Have you forgot it so soon?"

The wretched girl groaned aloud.

"You are silent," continued her interrogator, "and well you may be; for you will hardly deny the solemn promise you made me not a week since; and now I call on you to fulfil it—do you consent?"

"Oh, have mercy—some mercy," she cried, rising and moving towards the door, "some mercy on a poor broken-hearted girl!"

"Do you consent, I say again?" sternly demanded Martin, rising and endeavouring to intercept her retreat.

"Do what you will with me—sell me for a slave—kill me if you please, but let me go now—oh do let me go!" was the beseeching reply, as with streaming eyes and convulsive sobs she escaped from her inquisitors, and fled to her own apartment.

"Let her go, Martin," said Gow hastily, as the other was about to follow or command her back, "let her go—let the matter rest just where it is. Silence gives consent of itself—besides, have you not her express leave to do with her just as you please? What more do you want?"

"Why, true, Gow," replied the other, hesitating under the twinges of some remains of conscience, which still lingered in spite of all the trainings it had lately received, "true, she all but consented, and did consent in a sort—but—but you see she is no more willing now than before—and how would you manage it?"

"Manage it! why, there is nothing to do but go a-head—you saddle your horse and go directly to the parson; tell him to publish the banns next Sunday, and be on hand to tie the knot on some day you and your wife shall fix on, as soon as your laws will allow; for I mean to go by Gunter in this business."

"Yes, but——"

"But what? You are thinking about raising the hundred dollars I conclude, or you would not hesitate to go on, your chance is so much better than ever to save it—I tell you, man, one thing or the other must be done soon."

The last hint was sufficient for a man of the disposition of Martin, and he at once forgot his qualms of conscience, and tamely promised obedience to the commands of the other.

"Well, then," said Gow, "go on, as I told you the game is now within certain reach, if all is kept still. We will let the girl alone pretty much till the day arrives, and in the meantime we will drive hard at our business at the mountain, for I should like amazingly to have a few of those jinglers in my pocket for wedding music."

"Amen to that," said Martin, as he left his friend for the business more immediately before him.

"Dirty miscreant!" soliloquized Gow, after his friend had left the room, "what a precious sconndrel, but for your pusillanimous fears, which only make you hesitate here or anywhere! But with all your duplicity and good will to play false with me, I can keep the

knave in you straight by means of the miser and the coward. Rogue as I am, I despise you for your meanness to this noble girl whom you should protect; and had I not a greater object in view than you can have in this affair, I would hang myself before I, who have no such duties towards her, would be guilty of even the part I am taking, though a thousand times more decent than yours. It will do me good to see you punished, as you will be with a vengeance, for this shuffling to me and baseness to her. Hah! you little think that while you are helping me to a fortune with one hand you are twisting a rope for your own neck with the other."

CHAPTER VII.

We will now follow the eager-eyed expectants of the glittering treasure to the theatre of their secret operations in the woods. A company of five individuals, besides Martin and Gow, had already been formed according to the plan before-mentioned, and many nights had been spent by them in making excavations on the spot indicated by their leader, who generally remained with them several hours each night in directing their movements, before he retired to his retreat on the mountain, where he had now for the most part taken up his quarters. For the first few nights of their digging he had directed their efforts to different places within a circle of some ten rods in diameter, designated by certain marks on the trees, and constituting a boundary within which, he told them, he had rendered it certain, by views obtained in his magic stone, and the working of the divining rods, that the money lay buried. But for several of the last nights he had ordered them to proceed on in excavating the same vein, assuring them that they might depend on having centered in the right place; and to so great a certainty was this now reduced, as his stone and often-tried rods informed him, that he could safely promise them that a few more nights' labour would bring them to the treasure. And, such being the case, he called on each man to have the bonus to be paid him, on reaching the first dollar, in readiness, at the same time declined assisting them any further till they severally complied with this indispensable requisition. This, for several days, caused a suspension of their labours; for it required no small exertion on the part of the company generally, and many sacrifices on the part of some of them, to raise, at that day, the necessary sum. But their exertions and sacrifices, great as they were in some cases, were cheerfully and even anxiously made, in the fancied certainty of soon being a thousand fold repaid in the glittering harvest which they were about to reap. Farms were unhesitatingly mortgaged to distant money lenders, oxen and horses, the only ones possessed by their owners, were sold at reduced prices, and all kinds of property were disposed of, or pledged for a tithe of its value, to meet the exigency. And so great was their activity that before one week had elapsed, every man of the company had reported himself to his leader as prepared with his hundred dollars in his pocket, and eagerly demanded to be led again to the work.

Hitherto the enterprise had been conducted with so much caution and secresy that little was known in the neighbourhood, except by those immediately concerned, of its existence, and much less of the object for which the company was formed. But either by reason of the stir created by raising the money, or because the growing certainty of success had rendered the different members of the association less guarded, vague rumours were beginning to be afloat in the neighbourhood that some uncommon adventure was going on in the mountains; and many were the conjectures and dark surmises made concerning its character and object—the secresy with which it had been conducted sufficing to throw an air of mystery and romance over the proceeding. And this had been considerably increased by the appearance, about this time, of a singularly accoutred old man, who had been known to enter the settlement from the north, and was several times afterwards seen hovering round the outskirts of the woods, back of which was the supposed scene of these mysterious operations; some believing him the devil himself come to superintend the ceremonies of the black art, which they suspected was in performance in the woods; and others, more given to matter-of-fact calculations, and disposed to view secresy and mystery as generally the cloak of iniquity, shrewdly suspecting him to be an agent sent from Stephen Burroughs' Snag Factory in Canada, to establish a branch

in these unexposed parts of the Green Mountains;* and it was the impression of all, indeed, that this strange personage had some connexion with the doings of the company. Those who were supposed to be its members stoutly denied the truth of this supposition, being, probably, with the exception of their leader, really as much in the dark concerning the cause of the appearance and the character of the old man as their neighbours.

It was on a dark night in July, a few days subsequent to the scene where we left our heroine at Martin's, that the money diggers resumed their labours. Excited by the late assurances of Gow, they came, one by one, stealing to the spot at an early hour, and as usual, having kindled a small fire, and stuck a pine-knot torch in a stump on the bank of the excavation, to furnish light for their operations, they waited, with nervous impatience, the arrival of their leader, to direct the spot on which their efforts were now to be bestowed. The latter soon made his appearance, and, after giving his directions with the mysterious gravity with which he had sustained his part through the whole enterprise, and seeing them fairly at work, he informed them that, from the experiments he had been making through the day, he had strong hopes of reaching the treasure in the course of a few hours, and that he should remain with them till the close of their labours for the night. This thrilling announcement added fresh ardour to their exertions, and wrought up their minds to the highest pitch of expectation and excitement. And, in imagination, new farms were already purchased; old ones richly stocked and improved; new houses built and finished; wives were rustling in their new silk gowns; tables were groaning with dainties, and hundreds were lavished with a free hand in treats by embryo captains of militia, or justices of the peace, on the occasion of their promotion, honours which their great wealth would certainly bring them. Thus, with lusty blows, and many a gleeful joke, they delved on till about midnight.

Gow now made another trial with his rods, and, after assaying them some time from different points with great seeming carefulness and accuracy, he rose with a satisfied air, and hastily throwing them aside as things whose aid was now no longer required, he joyfully announced to his associates that the hour which was to crown their labour with success was at last arrived, but that it was the hour, likewise, that would, very probably, put all their prudence and fortitude to the severest trial; for he must now apprise them, that in those cases where any murder or other great wickedness had been committed in connexion with secreting a treasure, there was generally considerable difficulty in securing it, even after it was fairly discovered, owing to the strange sights and noises which were seen and heard about the time of reaching and attempting to seize it. But these sounds or apparitions, as startling and terrible as they might seem, would hurt nobody, nor prevent securing the money, if no attention was paid to them; while, if the attention at that critical moment was suffered to be diverted, and the eye withdrawn from the spot, the money, somehow or other, was almost sure to get away, or be so lost sight of, that it could not be found again without a new course of digging and experiments. This, to be sure, might not be a case where any such difficulty would occur, but it is always best to be prepared for the worst; and, therefore, the instant it was announced that the money was reached, every man must have all his senses about him, and confine them to the spot; and on no account to look off, or suffer a glance or thought to stray to what might be doing around him, but grapple at the treasure as soon as it was laid open, in whatever shape it be found, and hang on for life, though the very devil might be yelling about his ears. With this startling caution he ordered the men to dig away the inequalities of the bottom, and level off a broad space where they had last been digging. With nerves agitated by fear and expectation they hurriedly went to work, and soon smothed down a space sufficiently broad to meet the mind of their leader. He then formed them in a circle around him, and taking a heavy crow-bar, and ordering every eye to be fixed intensely on the spot where he should strike, and if any signs of hitting the money followed, to dig for their lives, he lifted high the heavy weapon, and thrust it deep into the ground. A sharp, grating sound, as of the deadened clinking of metals under ground, followed the blow; and a low, eager, suppressed shout of exultation simultaneously escaped from the lips of all the company; while, almost at the same instant, a deep, unearthly groan issued from the nearest thicket, striking

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* The counterfeit bills by which the celebrated Stephen Burroughs once flooded the country, were at *that day usually denominated snags.*

the ear with horrible distinctness, and causing every heart to quake with apprehension. Gow quickly repeated his blow, and it was again followed by the same cheering sound from the earth, and the same, and still more startling groan from the thicket.

"Now dig!—dig for your very lives!" sternly exclaimed Gow. Rallying their sinking courage at the command, they fell furiously to work, throwing the earth in every direction by their vague and random blows, and seemingly trying to stifle their fears by the desperate energy of their efforts, as nearer and more terrific grew the fearful sounds around them. Still managing, however, to keep their eyes on the work, though scarcely able to control the movements of their shaking and quaking limbs, they soon laid bare what they took to be the iron chest containing their prize.

"The lid! the lid!—seize, and raise the lid!" cried Gow, and every eye was upon the spot. So saying, he seized a bar, and thrusting it under the supposed lid, raised one side of it several inches from its bed, when the sight of rusty dollars beneath, dimly glittering in the feeble light of their torch, greeted their enraptured sight.

"There! there it is!" shouted the men.—"Up with the lid then, and seize it!" cried Gow. One of them accordingly grappled with the lid, and had raised it nearly upright, when, in the act of stooping, involuntarily casting a look through his arms back on the bank behind them, he gave a shriek of terror, which turned all eyes on the spot indicated by his wild gestures. On the bank above them, at a few yards distant, stood an apparition which made the blood curdle in their veins. The figure of an old man, his head and arms bare, and his long hair, of milky whiteness, streaming down over his shoulder, one of his skeleton arms thrown aloft, and the other pointing to his bloody throat, which seemed to be cut from ear to ear, while from his sunken sockets his eyes shone like two burning coals, and from his mouth a blue flame appeared to issue, showing long rows of spike-fashioned teeth glowing like red-hot iron. "Seize the money!" vociferated Gow, at the same time plunging his hands under the lid. Partly roused by the words of their leader, the appalled and horror-struck men were making a confused motion to follow his example, when the apparition, seizing their torch and whirling it wide into the bushes, leaped, with a hideous screech, directly upon them. Tumbling one over another in the darkness and confusion, all but Gow sprang wildly up the bank, and fled from the spot like frighted sheep from beneath the crash of a falling thunderbolt; some running against trees, which threw them back stunned and nearly senseless on the ground by the shock—some tumbling over logs, and there laying in breathless stillness, and some fleeing and hiding themselves in distant thickets till his infernal majesty, as they verily believed him, should be pleased to take his departure. All was now dark and silent as the tomb. Gow, however, who had fearlessly remained on the spot, either because he had more nerve than his associates, or because he was better acquainted with his majesty, soon found his way to the decayed fire kept for lighting their torches, and lighting up a fresh knot, proceeded to the spot from which the company had been so strangely driven, and put things in such a situation as best comported with his purposes. After which he began to call loudly to his men to return, as the ghost, or whatever it was that had spoiled their game, was gone, and there was no further danger, he assured them, of his appearing that night. One by one the men came creeping cautiously and stealthily from their hiding places; and all at length were again assembled on the bank of the excavation; when, after being a little reassured by the words of their leader and the presence of one another, they all proceeded to the spot where they had last seen the supposed chest; but no appearance of either chest or money remained, and a little loose earth gave the only indication of the spot where they had discovered it. "The game is all up for to-night, as I supposed," observed Gow, after thrusting down a stick a few times. "The game is up for this time, and now you see what you have lost by not attending to my cautions, and keeping better command of yourselves, when it was all nothing but an empty apparition—the mere shadow of some old codger that has been dead and rotten these hundred years, and that could have neither hurt or been felt by anybody."

"Don't know zactly about that, captain," interrupted one; "he grabbed my leg as I was springing up the bank there, I'll swear to ye, and if I hadn't kicked him off he'd a carried me under where the chest is, fur zino."

"Yes, and he chased me like thunder way out there in the woods," said another, his teeth still chattering from fright, "and gave me a lick over the head that knocked me down with as

a tom cod; and here's the marks on't now," he continued, rubbing and showing his forehead, which had been barked by running against a tree.

"He came from a brimstone country anyhow, for I smelt it as plain as day—and seems to me I can smell it now," observed a third, snuffing, and turning his nose round in different directions.

"How like a painter he bellowed and screeched it, just as he jumped!" exclaimed a fourth; "I vow it made my hair stand up so stiff it shoved my hat off."

"And what eyes!" added a fifth; "my stars, how they glared! if that are thing wasn't the devil, no matter!"

"Pshaw! pshaw!" said Gow, "all nonsense, I assure you; this is all nothing to what I have met with at such times, and you yourselves will be convinced of it by the time we have had another such; but now let us see how much we did get."

They then, taking a smooth place without the excavation, proceeded to produce and count the few dollars they had seized when driven from their hold on the treasure. Gow and Martin, it appeared, were the only ones who were fairly successful in getting hold of any, each of whom had grasped and retained a single handful of bona fide dollars, amounting to thirty in number; of this there could be no mistake, for they were spread before them, and though a little rusty, as might be expected, were yet, to all appearance, genuine Spanish coin; furnishing indubitable evidence to those who might have hitherto entertained doubts of the existence of the treasure that money was here, and with proper management might be secured. And this cheering thought, with the assurances of their leader that there would be no difficulty in again finding the chest with one or two nights' digging, and that these disturbances to frighten them away were comparatively light after the first ordeal, raised their spirits almost to their former level; and as they sat in a ring round the fire, with an occasional glance of wildness, and sometimes convulsive start, the lingering effects of their recent fright, eagerly handling and eyeing the dollars like scared children who had been appeased with toys, they began once more to crack their jokes over their strange adventure, and again grow rich in the prospects of another trial for the slippery treasure.

Taking advantage of this state of feeling, and the renewed expectations which he had succeeded in raising in their minds, Gow now told them, as the treasure had been discovered, and the first dollar found, the contingency had therefore happened which entitled him to a hundred dollars from each, and gave them to understand that he expected their immediate compliance with their bargain. To this, after some demurring and a few manifestations of reluctance, they finally assented, and producing their money, they, with the exception of Martin, paid him on the spot. And this business being adjusted, and an arrangement made to commence operations again as soon as the situation of the treasure could be ascertained by experiments, the band separated for the night—the men to dream of devils and pots of money, and their artful leader to hug the reality of five hundred dollars.

CHAPTER VIII.

Let us now return to the disconsolate girl whom we left sinking under the accumulated load of distress occasioned by the desertion of one lover in whom she had centred her every hope of happiness, and whose image she had enwrapped in her very heart's core, and the fresh and deeply abetted persecutions of another, the object of her rooted dislike and suspicion, whose presence even was painful and perplexing to her feelings. After the interview at which May received the letter so astounding to her hopes and long-cherished affections, Martin carried into immediate effect the preliminaries of marriage recommended and urged by his bold and determined associate; and the banns were accordingly published the next Sunday at the village, and the attendance of the minister bespoken to celebrate the nuptials one week from the Tuesday evening next succeeding the publishment. May, in the meantime, the person above all others the most interested in this movement, had never been in the least consulted, but kept in entire ignorance of its existence; and never dreaming that any immediate advantage would be taken of a promise made on condition of a desertion which in her unbounded confidence she believed could never happen, and which, as she now suspected, was artfully exacted

by Martin with a knowledge previously received, from some source or other, of Ashley's defection; or that anything would be tortured into a consent which she subsequently uttered in her grief and agitation at the intelligence by which that confidence, as well as all her happiness, was swept away at a blow; and wholly unsuspecting, indeed, of the measures which had been taken, and which had made such fearful progress towards disposing of her to one she so thoroughly detested, she continued several days drooping in listless apathy to all was that passing around her, brooding over her griefs with feelings of anguish to be imagined only by those whose sensibilities have received a similar shock, or looking forward to the chill and dreary future, there to find no ray of consolation to compensate for the settled and heart-blighting woe of the present. And it was not till two or three days after the event that she accidentally overheard, in a conversation between her mother and a neighbour who had called at the door, that the intention of marriage between herself and Gow had been publicly proclaimed the preceding Sunday, and that not a week intervened before the fatal day fixed on for its consummation. The poor girl, as well she might be, was petrified with astonishment, and filled with mingled emotions of dread and indignation at the discovery. As great, however, as was her dismay at the dreaded fate which she saw preparing for her—as deep as was her indignation at the effrontery of Gow, and the baseness of those who had sanctioned his conduct, she made no outcry, uttered no word of alarm or reproach, questioned no one, called no one to her council, or even hinted that she was apprised of what was in progress; for where should she go for succour or advice? The friend, and more than friend, on whom she had all along relied to return soon enough to relieve her from her troubles before any measure of actual compulsion should be used, had now cruelly deserted, and left her unsupported in heart, and friendless and unprotected in her extremities; the neighbours, if the delicacy of her feelings would permit her to apply to them, were indifferent or against her, or at best would have no power to relieve her; and her parents, who should be her friendly advisers and protectors, she well knew were, instead, the abettors, if not the prime movers, of all that had been done. She saw at a glance how she had been entrapped—how the advantage she had unwittingly given them had been seized as a pretended excuse for the steps they had taken; and she could easily foresee that this would furnish them with the same plea, as false, hypocritical, and base, as their consciences must tell them it was, for forcing her on till she was irretrievably bound in by their toils. And although she knew not half the extent of their baseness and treachery, she yet knew enough to fill her with dread for the result of their machinations, and cause her nearly to despair of being able to extricate herself from the snares by which they had beset her. And yet she at times looked on the fate that now seemed rapidly approaching, dreaded as it had been, and still was, to her sober reflection, with an indifference and apathy of feeling, which one week before would have astonished even herself. There was a strange wayward feeling that occasionally came mingling in the perturbed tumult of her mind, and seemed half to court the very fate she would avoid. Why should she care now, it said, what became of her? Life was now for ever a blank to her, and no happiness was to be saved by avoiding her doom; and offended pride then resentfully threw in her plea, "He might have saved all this; he has cruelly deserted me in the hour of need, and that desertion, besides withering my heart to its core, has thrown me into the snares of a villain. How the thought, when he hears of my fate, will sharpen the stings of conscience that must goad him for his conduct. But what will he care," she said, her better feelings again predominating, "what will he care now for the wretched, wretched girl?" and her tears streamed afresh at the sickening answer her mind despairingly responded. "Destroy thyself," whispered the tempter. Starting at the obtruding thought, she fell upon her knees, and poured out her heart to her God, besought him to banish these dreadful feelings from her bosom, and implored his divine assistance in snatching her from the threatening peril, and restoring her to tranquillity. She arose, meek and calmed from the devotion, and took her Bible, there to find some balm for her bruised spirit. She opened upon a paper on which she recollected some time before to have penned a sentiment, and left it unfinished while hesitating in the choice of a word. Her attention immediately became rivetted to the writing. The words were repeated below on the same paper, and in her own hand apparently with the lacking word supplied. When could I have done this? she asked herself in surprise. And that word, too, which I could not recall—that is here—it cannot be; and yet it is my own hand. She cast her eye still further down.

where she had written her name, May Martin. This also she remembered to have done once; but here it was repeated a dozen times, and last of all was written May Gow. I never coupled those two names together; she exclaimed, starting up, while a flash of light broke in on her mind that made her clap her hands for joy. The Bible had, till within a day or two, lain in the window in a room where Gow had often been alone—pen and ink were always there—he must have done it, and for the purpose of learning to counterfeit her hand,—and how well he had succeeded. But if he could do this, why not have also written the letter she had received purporting to be from Ashley—he did, he did. As this rapid process ran through her mind to the conclusion, she flew to the pretended letter from Ashley, compared all the little particularities of the hand to the writing just discovered, and doubted no longer. "It is, it is so. He did write me—Martin gave the villain the letter, and he kept it, and by it counterfeited the hand in the letter they gave me. Oh, a mountain is off my heart! Ashley, my dear Ashley, is faithful. Oh, how could I ever have doubted him! But I will now live—now save myself from him—in spite of them all I will do it, and hesitate no longer about exposing this wretch, and bringing him to punishment." Such were the exclamations of May as she paced the room in a delirium of joy. It was her first thought to write immediately to her lover, and she had seized a sheet for the purpose, but a second thought suggested that the real letter might, after all, have contained something similar to what she had received, or at least something which, if she had it, would materially vary what she was about to write, and that she had better defer her purpose till she thought over the possibilities of obtaining it. She reasoned that the letter was still in existence, as Gow would keep it, thinking he might have occasion to counterfeit the hand again in the prosecution of his designs; that he probably would not carry it about his person, for fear of losing or accidentally exposing it, and that it was doubtless now in his cabin in the woods, and most likely left unconcealed, as she had gathered from various intimations that he stayed there alone, and that no one ever presumed to approach his retreat; and having already pretty well ascertained that the employment of Gow and his associates in the woods was that of digging money or precious ores, which she supposed he had persuaded them to believe could be found there, and knowing that he must necessarily be absent from his cabin whenever they were engaged in digging, which, from Martin's going and return, she had learned was the first part of the night, she, not thinking of any one whom she could employ for the purpose, conceived the bold project of going herself into the mountain by night, after the family had retired, and attempting to get possession of the letter. But how should she ascertain where this cabin or shantee was situated? In her younger years she had often, and with delight, rambled through the woods with her mates in search of nuts, or medicinal roots and herbs for the yearly supply of the family. She knew well the whole tract of forest back to the mountains, and even a portion of them she had occasionally ascended; but how was this to enable her to find in the night a place which was not known even to the associates of the man, who, from no creditable motives, she suspected, had thus carefully concealed his retreat? She knew not; but her discovery had given a new impulse to her life, rousing every thought and energy of her soul into action; and so far from yielding to the obstacle, her mind became busied in expedients to overcome it.

There was in the neighbourhood a boy of about fifteen years of age, known by the appellation of shrewd David, the prefix of which was gained him by his uncommon sagacity and keenness of observation of all that was passing around him, being the son of a poor widow of the name of Butler, who, supporting herself by her loom and needle, and having no business for the boy except to take care of her cow and procure her wood, had left him mostly to shift for himself; and although bred in ignorance, yet for doing an errand, riding for the doctor in cases of emergency, or going as an express on affairs requiring secrecy and prudence, he had acquired a character for great dispatch, skill, and fidelity; and as for finding a sheep or kine strayed or lost in the woods, or for the more daring feats of seeking out the retreat of a mischievous bear or wolf, none were equal to shrewd David; for naturally intrepid, nimble and active as the squirrel which he delighted to follow to the tops of the highest trees, and crafty in expedients as the doubling fox, which, with the keenness of the greyhound's sight and almost the fleetness, he often drove to the long-eluded burrow,—there was scarcely a rood of mountain or moorland in the settlement with which he was not familiar. Among others, he *had several times* been employed by Ashley as an assistant in his surveys in the woods, and

May had often heard her lover speak in the highest terms of the honesty and capacity of the hardy little woodsman.

As our heroine sat by her window facing the garden at the back of the house, her mind absorbed in devising means for accomplishing the object on which we left her pondering, her eye caught the form of the boy just described, sitting on a rock and fishing for trout in a brook which ran by the house just without the enclosure of the garden, and the thought instantly occurred to her that he would be a useful and trusty assistant in effecting the object she had in view. Full of this idea, she immediately repaired to the fence opposite, and within a few feet of where the boy was sitting.

"Come, trout," he was saying to himself, as he sat so deeply engrossed in his tantalizing employment as not to have heeded the noiseless approach of his visitor; "come, come, trouty, I gives you a fair invite to be at my breakfast to-morrow morning; and I knows you are aching to snap at that worm as bad as I am to have you, so out from under the rock with you in a jiffin. Well, now, blast your scary picture, I guesses I can wait as long as you can, any how."

"What luck to-day, David?" at length asked May, hesitating to interrupt him in his soliloquy.

"Why!" exclaimed the boy, rapidly throwing the glances of his keen grey eyes about him till they settled on his fair interrogator. "Why, Miss May! dog my cat, but you half scares me! What luck? O, not much; the flies are getting so thick that the fishes begin to think they can get their dinners at a cheaper rate than I offers them."

"But you like the employment, don't you, David?"

"O yes, when they aint so dainty about their victuals, but rather dull music now; I loves better to be scrambling over the mountains with Mr Ashley. When will he come back?—but they say he aint a-comin' back ever."

"I am sure—I expect—that is, I hope he will return, David," replied May, blushing and hesitating at being brought so very abruptly to the very subject she had at heart.

"Why, mother says he sent a letter about marrying another girl; and they all say you are going to marry that Mister Gow, that folks think is such a wonderful man, and was published last Sunday."

"I have just heard that I was published."

"Just heard!—now that's a good one, Miss May."

"David!"

"What?"

"Could I trust you with a secret?"

"What secret?"

"Why, if I wished to engage your assistance in some affair that I had reasons for keeping secret, would you try to oblige me, and keep it to yourself?"

"I mought, and then I mought not again," replied the boy, with a droll, shrewd, half-serious, and half-joking expression. "I jumps at the chance a month agone, but the fact is, Miss May, when I hears you are going to have that Mister Gow, I don't like you so well as I wants to."

"Well, David, I don't blame you for it; but if that is all you dislike in me, we can be friends again at once; for I can assure you I will never marry Gow if there is any way to prevent it."

"Good now!" exclaimed he, jumping up with animation, and throwing down his fishpole hard upon the rock; "there! see that pesky trout whipping off!" he continued, in an under tone, pointing into the brook.

"But why, David, should you care about my marrying Gow?"

"Because I hates him. You see I likes to know what's going on, and goes one day to the mountain, and finds where they digs a nights for money. Well, while I looks about there guessing it all out, down comes that mister with a switch in one hand behind him, and afore I thinks anything's to pay gives me two or three tough ones right over my head, and says, 'Now keep off, you little himp, or I cuts you into mince meat.' But David Butler is not made of wood—he remembers and thinks. So I watches everything, and soon makes up my mind that he's a black one, trying to tomfool the folks and get away their money, for I finds they've

been round borrowing money, and what for is it? they don't want it to make their potatoes grow, I guesses. And what for is it, too, that he wants to be alone there in the mountains, where nobody must see his place?"

"True, true, David; shrewd they rightly call you. I too have suspected nearly all this, and still know something besides of the fellow. And now will you keep my secret and engage for me? It is this same villain that I want you to assist me defeating. Will you promise?"

"Yes, Miss May, I promises now, and what I says I does."

"Well, David, I have discovered, as I think, that the letter you heard of was made up by Gow to deceive me and make me listen to his offers."

"Zounds! I'd fix him. And Mr Ashley didn't write any letter?"

"Yes, I am satisfied he did, for Gow could have had no other means of counterfeiting Mr Ashley's hand. Mr Martin took the letter from the office and gave it to Gow, who, I feel very sure, has still got it and keeps it laid away in his place in the mountain. Do you know, David, where this is?"

"I guesses pretty close at it. I thinks it is the old cave that Mr Ashley and I once finds in coming over the mountain. I sees almost every night, just after dark, a little glim of light away up there, just peeping through the trees."

"Is there such a place?—that is doubtless it then. Now, David, can you go and get me the letter?"

"What! in the daytime?—he's always there, and won't let me have it."

"No, in the night, when he is away with the diggers."

"Maybe the old man's there; they do say, Miss May, he's the old one himself, helping them to dig money with the black art. I'd go for you and take a bear out of a trap, if 'twas as dark as a nigger's pocket, for I always knows how to fight such like—but the old one! I fears to go alone cause of he."

"But if I would go with you?" said May, smiling at his superstitious fears, but thinking it would be useless to combat them.

"You! you, Miss May!"

"Yes, David, I will go, and this very night, as soon as mother's asleep; they have not been digging for several nights past, but I overheard Mr Martin say they were going to begin again to-night; and Gow, of course, will be absent from his cave. Will you come, go with me, and guide me to the place?"

"I goes," said the little fellow, plucking up; "the old one never comes near if you be there, Miss May, and I fears nothing else."

"Well, then, meet me at this spot to-night, as soon as you see the light put out in mother's room; and though it is out of my power to pay you now, David, I will some day or other see you handsomely rewarded."

"I works for pay sometimes, cause mother's poor; but I likes Mr Ashley, and I likes you now; and I goes just as well for likes as money."

So saying, and gathering himself up proudly, the little fellow took his fishing implements and hastily moved off, as if his excited feelings were hurrying him away to prepare for the expedition.

"Don't forget to be here to-night in season," said May, calling after him.

"I never forgets anything," replied the boy, increasing his pace.

Our heroine now returned to her domestic avocations in a state of the highest excitement, created by her newly raised hopes and the thoughts of her projected adventure, and impatiently awaited the time set for undertaking it. It was her first object to obtain her letter; but although her great anxiety for its possession had prompted to this bold, and, to a female situated as she was, somewhat hazardous enterprise, she yet had other inducements to visit the cavern. She highly suspected Gow of deep and complicated villany, and thought it not improbable that something might there be discovered which would enable her to unmask him; for if any of his deeds had rendered him obnoxious to punishment, she, in view of justice and public good, as well as her own wrongs and her own safety, was fully determined to expose him by every means in her power, believing this was now not only due from her, but the surest, and perhaps the only way, she could escape from the dreaded fate which seemed so menacingly impending over her unprotected head.

CHAPTER IX.

At the appointed hour, May repaired to the spot agreed on in the garden, and found her sturdy little guide already there patiently awaiting her arrival.

"Ah, ah, Miss May," said David, cautiously peering about, "up to the chalk after all; that's a brave one for a lady; I guesses all the afternoon as how you'd flummux when it come dark."

"Not so easily frightened, David. Are you ready? lead on, then."

On this, they silently set forward across the fields, and soon reached the woods. Before entering them, however, the boy, proposing a halt, mounted several tall stumps successively for obtaining an observation, and having at last succeeded, he returned to the side of his companion, and observed—

"I sees a little twinkle up there once in a while—there. I sees it from here now; here, look where I points; do you see it now?"

"Ah, yes, I did catch it then."

"Well, that's the place; about half a mile off; I knows a good cow path to the mountain, but when we gets there I knows but one way to the cave—nation bad and steep too, Miss May, but I finds the way for all the dark; and here feel the end of this cord—I brings it for you to hang on to, so you don't get lost in the bushes. And now, Miss May, if you aint afeard, I lead you to the spot; I guesses that mister has come down among the diggers by this time, for I watches and sees them going afore I comes for you; so now, if the old man isn't there, we finds a clear run, and no snakes."

"David," said May, not knowing how far the boy's hobgoblin fears might carry him, in case they met any one, and being aware how much depended on him in the adventure, "you have very wrong notions about this old man who has been seen about here; he is either some poor crazy vagabond, or else a brother rogue of Gow; but, at all events, nothing more than a man."

"Oh, I fears nothing for him; cause if he be the old one,—when he sees you, Miss May, he clears out in a hurry."

The boy now plunged into the woods, followed by his daring companion, and striking into the path, proceeded slowly and cautiously on to the foot of the mountains at some little distance from where the money diggers were assembling for their night operations.

It was the same night which we have already described as proving so exciting and fearful to these enthusiasts in searching for the buried mammon, we having found it most convenient in describing their operations, to go forward of the events of the other part of our narrative.

The night was unusually dark, and the thick mass of the full grown foliage of the heavy overhanging forest completely shutting out the faint suffusions of the skylight, which was scarcely perceptible even in the open field, and adding a still deeper shade to the ordinary darkness, no common or unaccustomed hand could have succeeded in advancing in the woods at all, much less in reaching any given point at a distance. But shrewd David, familiar with every peculiar tree, every turn of the path, and every inequality of the ground, and possessed of a vision uncommonly acute, carrying a long stick in his hand to apprise him of each interposing obstacle, while his bare feet informing him by the feel of the first step's deviation from the slightly trod path, threaded the difficult way with surprising accuracy, finding but little trouble for himself, and kindly endeavouring, by removing every limb or bush from the way, and timely notifying her of every log or other obstacle to be surmounted, to aid his less practised companion in her more embarrassed progress.

Sometimes the resolution of May for a moment wavered, and her heart almost misgave her at the boldness of her own undertaking and the difficulties of its accomplishment; but a sense of her own wrongs as often occurring to rouse her bosom to resistance, and the thoughts of what must soon be her fate without a perseverance in her plans, impelling her onward to action, bore up her courage through all, and tempered her usually mild spirit with an energy adequate to the trying emergency.

They at length arrived at the foot of the here steeply ascending mountain. David now again came to a halt for the purpose of ascertaining his bearings, and finding the most feasible

place for climbing the ascent. After groping about awhile, he returned, and informing May that he had succeeded in finding the place where he intended to go up, he led her to the spot.

"Now, Miss May," he said in a low, cautious tone, "now for the tougher. I listens and just hears the diggers at their work—not a great ways off from here they are now. That mister, I guesses, has come down afore this; but if he aint, and we meets him, I hears him coming time enough, and when I gives three jerks of the cord you must slink under a bush or something, and lie still as a mouse, and I does the same till he gets by. So now let's pull for it."

"Bless me!" said May, just being able to discern the dark outline of the steep, which rose like the side of a house before her. "Bless me, David, we havn't got to climb up here?"

"Yes, no other way for it—but never mind, we goes it—and I tells you what, Miss May, you tie the end of the cord round you, like I've done—there! now let them white hands work for their living. I seizes at the roots and bushes along up, and if you pulls me back, you must be stronger than that peaky old bear that grappled hold of my trowsers last summer, just as I springs and scrambles up a sapling to get out of the way of her."

With this they commenced their laborious and difficult task of climbing the mountain.

Slowly clambering from tree to tree and rock to rock, our sturdy and active little mountaineer, followed by his scarcely less agile and resolute companion, continued to work his way several hundred feet up the almost perpendicular ascent, till they came to a narrow level, beyond which an upright and wall-like ledge interposed an insurmountable obstacle to their proceeding any further in the direction they had been pursuing.

"Ah! I remembers this cute place," whispered David, as they both dropped down on a mossy rock, on reaching the summit, through sheer exhaustion from the severity of their struggles. "I remember this—we are most there now—only go along a piece on this level till we comes to the end, and then when we mounts another rock, and just gets round a point of a ledge, there's the cave—no trouble but we finds it, cause see! there's more light, now we've got above the tops of the trees, down there below."

Our adventurers again set forward along the scanty shelf towards the north, keeping as near to the ledgy barrier on the left as possible, as on the right, and often within a yard of their feet, yawned the black and fearful chasm of the precipice, here falling down perpendicularly some hundred feet beneath them. They soon, however, and safely reached the termination of their walk in this direction. For at this place, while the shelf along which, for nearly a hundred yards, they had now passed, considerably widened, a tall rock shot out boldly from the ledge on the left, forming a rectangular arena of several square rods of level surface, in the corner of which stood a small tree whose branches overtopped the ledge above, here not more than ten feet in height.

"There, Miss May," said the little guide, "when we gets up a top of this we are within a few rods of the place where the mister stays, as I now feels sure, cause I finds the twigs and bushes broke off along back there where he brushes by in going and coming, and I knows well enough nobody else comes to this mortal place."

"Yes, David, but how are we ever to get up there?"

"Why, I supposed all the time that he'd a fixed up some contrivance to get up and down, but I sees none. When Mr Ashley and I come down, we gets up into the top of that tree; but you can't climb, can you, Miss May?"

"I never tried it, David, I believe, or at least not lately; but is there no other way?"

"Stop a bit—let's see a little," replied the boy. So saying, and passing along the base of the ledge, he soon announced that he saw something projecting over the top of the rock which he thought to be some kind of a ladder. And now nimbly mounting the tree and jumping on to the rock, he proceeded to let down the contrivance he had discovered, which proved to be a light ladder, composed of two poles distended at the ends by split sticks, with strong bark ropes confined at proper intervals to the sides to serve in lieu of rounds. Our heroine courageously mounted, and soon stood at the side of her companion on the top of the rock. Here they found another level, terminating at the distance of two or three rods in another and still loftier ledge of rocks. After pulling up and carefully adjusting the ladder in its original position, David proposed, as, from finding the ladder at the top, Gow might still be in the cave, to leave May under a projecting cliff, and go round the point of the ledge

which only intervened between them and the cave, for the purpose of reconnoitering the spot. Accordingly he noiselessly sunk away, and after a short absence he returned, and creeping close up to May, he put his mouth to her ear and whispered—

"Sure as guns, Miss May, they be there yet!"

"They!" repeated the other with some agitation, "they! who? are there two of them?"

"Yes, the mister, and another oldish man, who I almost thinks must be the old man himself; though for certain he aint got the same awful queer face on now that he had when I gets a peep at him one day in the edge of the woods. They've built out a sort of place with stakes and bark right afore the cave, so as to make it come all in one room; so I creeps up behind, and gets a look at 'em through the holes."

"Ah, ha!" mused May, "this old man then wears a disguise—he is beyond all doubt an associate of Gow. But what is to be done now, David?"

"Why, I thinks we better creep round where I did, so as to be on the back side, cause I expects the mister, and may be tother one, comes this way soon now to go down to the diggers; and if they takes a light they see us, but if we goes round there, they won't go that way for anything, I guesses; and if they do, we can slink off into the bushes, for there's a clear run that way. So we better get round there and wait till they goes, or we give it up."

May at once falling in with this advice, our adventurers proceeded with the utmost silence and caution round the projecting point, and immediately found themselves directly in front of, and not twenty yards from, the entrance of the cavern. Voices were now distinctly heard within, while a portion of light escaped through the narrow entrance, which was stopped by setting a broad piece of bark upright on the inner side before it. With a slight shudder May obeyed the motions of her guide, and they passed on, keeping as great a distance from the cave as the still continued precipice on the right would safely permit, and soon reached a spot where the offset of the ledge forming the cave seemed to terminate, leaving an opening of only a gentle rise upon the mountain. Here, safe from discovery, they sat down to watch the movements of the inmates of the cave, the new addition or front of which was still in plain sight.

See that little streak of light through the side there, Miss May? Well there's where I gets my peep. Suppose now you creeps up and tries it, and I comes after you gets still."

"Can I do it without danger of being heard?"

"Yes, if you feels every place where you puts your foot down, to see that there's no dry brush or leaves to make a noise."

Another moment and our heroine was gliding silently to the spot—another, and she was breathlessly seeing and hearing all that was passing within. The two worthies were seated on a rude bench made of a cleft log, placed before a small fire, built just without the entrance of the natural cave, so as to afford the smoke a chance of escape through the opening left in the bark roof above.

"Let's see, to-day is Thursday," observed the elder, a man apparently about fifty, the first to break silence after May's arrival at her loophole. "To-day is Thursday; next Tuesday evening brings your concern to a focus, hey?"

"Next Tuesday, my old boy, is the day that gives me as smart a little jade of a wife as ever handled broomstick—together with all the appurtenances thereunto belonging, as my old dad's parchment used to run."

"Ay, ay, the appurtenances after division, remember! As to wife, she should have been named last, she is but the incumbrance."

"Why, as for that, Col, she is really so smooth a piece that I think I can stick to and be quite husbandlike for a year or so, and by that time I intend to have all said appurtenances in the shape of cash in my pocket; after which I shall probably be ready for a little high life by way of adventures again."

"Having duly and impartially divided——"

"What a suspicious devil you are, Col. Yes, yes, I am honest and honour bright in this business, depend on't."

"Really! You well know how I can help myself if you don't walk straight, my conscientious lad."

"Come, none of your threatening! I can do as much even at that as you can, I am

thinking. But as to this affair, I freely say you will be well entitled to share the plunder, let it be as much as it may, for you first started the project and gave me the chance. But how, Col, did you happen to find out that the old man made such a will? you never told me exactly, I think."

"Why, hearing that the old man was confined, and all others there who formerly knew me dead or removed, I ventured to spend some months in town, and remaining there till after the old fellow popped off, when the subject of his family and estate was a good deal talked of. I happened one day to overhear a lawyer, who drew the will, telling a friend all the particulars: he said Frank had written home a penitent letter, informing his father of his private marriage, in the days of his wild oats, long before he went abroad, and that though his wife died at the birth of her first child, yet that child probably was still living, having been left with some family in the north part of New Hampshire, and winding off by asking the old man's forgiveness, and hoping he would provide for his child, a daughter, he was told; on which the old man forgot all his temper, threw the old will, cutting Frank off, into the fire—made a new one, giving him all his property except these legacies, in case the girl was alive. I afterwards went to the register's office myself, and, under some pretence or other, got a peep at the will, and found it as I had heard. It was then, knowing Frank would come home from France as soon as he heard of his father's death, to take possession of his estate, I hunted you up and put you on this scheme, so as to have all done before his return."

"And all shall be done, my precious old match-maker; but my very good friends, the money diggers, are by this time on the ground below, and doubtless impatient for my coming. I must be off. Let's see, how many of your salt and water rusty dollars did we bury there?"

"Just thirty, I believe."

"Five apiece, hey? Zounds, how the fellows will jump at the sight of 'em if they are of domestic manufacture—that is if my very worthy friend, the devil here, don't frighten them out of their senses."

"Yes, but you had better have heard to me, Gow, and put them off till the night before or after you are married. The fools, I am afraid, will go and pass some of their dollars, and then we stand an even chance to get blown up before you bring your affair to a point."

"Blown up—how? We get five hundred dollars of the real to-night; and as for what they dig up, we shall not pass it; and who can know where it comes from?"

"No, no; but they will some way or other connect it with you; and if they do suspect you, I tell you again, ten to one it don't blow your marriage into moonshine."

"They won't pass it; our plan of secrecy, till they get fairly hold of the treasure, will prevent that, at least till I secure my treasure, and the next day, under pretence of a short journey, I am off with my wife, you see; and you the same night as soon as you find me fairly buckled, I suppose. But I must go; have you your disguise ready—the phosphorus for the eyes and mouth of your mask? Well, then, come on pretty soon—get a good position in the bushes near, and when I sing out 'There's the money, seize it,' then you—but you will know how to manage."

With this, Gow, lighting a small pocket lantern, with which both he and his associates seemed provided, left the cabin; and May, who sat trembling with apprehension lest he should come round the corner and discover her, soon, to her great relief, heard him let down the ladder and descend. David, after Gow's departure, came crawling to the side of his companion, and now shared with her the crevice in observing the movements of the remaining inmate of the place. The old man, on being left alone, soon sunk into a deep reverie, and sat so long in his mute and motionless abstraction that his silent and unsuspected observers began to fear that he intended to remain, or that he would fall asleep, and thus defeat their purpose of searching the interior; at last, however, rousing up and shaking off his seeming lethargy, he arose, went back into the cave, and brought out the different articles of his disguise for the part he was about to enact in the farce below. He then, taking up and fitting on a frightful-looking mask, turned round, protruding his long neck forward first on one side thon another, as if practising attitudes and trying to hit on the most hideous.

"Wheugh, wheugh," went David, forcing out his breath in a sort of half-whistle, and then suddenly checked himself and relapsing into silence.

The old man next took from a little box, and rubbed round the small outlets for the eyes

and mouth what appeared to be a whitish substance, but which, as the shade occasionally fell on the face, shone like fire. Then taking off his coat, rolling his shirt sleeves up to his shoulders and baring his neck, he drew some bright red ochre several times from ear to ear, giving his throat the appearance of having been cut across in a long bloody gash; after which he put on an old sleeveless shirt, apparently besmeared in spots with gore, and then surmounted this dress with a white horse-hair whig, rising stiff and bristly on the top of the head like a tuft of porcupine quills, and flowing down in long snaky ringlets over his neck and shoulders below, making a whole as grotesque and hideous as well could be imagined. Having thus completed his equipment, he lit his lamp, and carefully raking up the fire, departed to be ready for the performance, with which the reader has already been made acquainted.

"O, lightning!" exclaimed David, as soon as the receding footsteps of the man had died away on his ear, "the very dog-skin that I sees by the wood-side—I knows him the minute he gets his queer tother face on. Well, if I didn't think all the time he must be the old one! But now—wheugh! he's no more devil than I be."

"I fear he is, David, in wickedness."

"O, he's as bad as the old one, maybe—but what thinks you he's going to do, Miss May?"

"I have learned their whole plot. You were right in your suspicions. These deliberate villains are about to defraud these men, whom they have duped with the idea of finding a treasure, out of a large sum of money, and are expecting to get hold of it to-night. I have also heard some very strange things about myself, I think it must be—which I may some time tell you. But now, David, let us proceed to the business for which we came—what I have been listening to had nearly driven it from my mind. If you will watch at the point of rocks yonder, to give me notice should either of them return, I will go in myself, and see what can be found."

The boy readily complying, May now unhesitatingly entered the place just left by the unsuspecting foes of her happiness, who were little dreaming that while, with such confidence of success, they were weaving the meshes of their toils for others, the least suspected of their intended victims, a poor unfriended girl, had already fathomed their villanous designs, and was rapidly preparing a mine soon and fatally to explode beneath their feet. On entering the cabin, May kindled a bright fire, and proceeded to the search. Going at once into the interior of the rock she came to a rude shelf, on which were placed some articles of provision, among which was a part of a loaf of bread of her own baking, while beneath, on the smooth stone floor, were ranged a plate or two, a few knives and forks, and the scanty utensils with which they prepared their food. Pausing a moment over these with womanly curiosity and criticism, she passed on, and soon came across sundry tools, the use of which she at first was at a loss to understand. A few imperfectly formed dollars, however, laying near, and now catching her eye, at once explained the mystery—they were a die and other implements for coining.

"Now," said she, exultingly, well aware of the penalties of counterfeiting, "now, at least, I have him in my power—but that for a last resort."

And she went on prying in vain into every place and corner for the main object of her search, till she had nearly given up all hopes of success. Turning to take one look more, however, before she went out at the door, she espied a pocket inkstand, and the corner of some writing-paper protruding from a small opening, or crevice, in the rock over the fire, which was not observable from other parts of the room. She flew to the spot, and, by the aid of the bench placed slantingly against the rock, made shift to reach and draw out the loose paper, among the leaves of which was a crumpled and soiled letter. Hastily descending, and holding it to the fire, she looked at the superscription—run her eye quickly over a few lines here and there—glanced at the signature at the bottom, and, with an ejaculated—"Thank Heaven!" eagerly thrust the precious prize into that female "receptacle of things lost on earth," the trusty bosom. Carefully replacing everything as she found it, she hurriedly left the cave, and in another moment had announced her success and her discoveries to her companion, and, with him, was on her way homeward.

Another half hour found our heroine standing on the spot at the garden where she started, safe returned from the exciting and perilous adventures of the night, and giving directions to her trusty little friend to be there the next morning, to take a letter to the village to her

betrothed, to whom she could now pour out her soul with confidence as undoubting as the fresh lit flame of her love was unquenchable.

We will not attempt to analyze or describe the tumultuous and mingled feelings that agitated the bosom of May after she found her head safely resting on her pillow on that eventful night. Now prayers of thankfulness at her timely discovery of the plots of her enemies were moving her lips—now tears of joy at the possession of a prize bringing such happiness to her heart were suffusing her sleepless eyes, and now various and tatalizing conjectures were racking her mind as she deeply pondered on the vague and partial intelligence she had obtained concerning her own history, hitherto a blank to her, but now connected, she no longer doubted, with her present misfortunes, and giving rise to her tormentor's anxiety to force her into marriage—till her busy thoughts and variant emotions gradually fading and sinking in chaos, became mingled and lost in the blank oblivion of the living death which "nature's great restorer, balmy sleep," brings to the disturbed and weary.

CHAPTER X.

The first dawning light of the next morning found May eagerly poring over the letter she had the last night so luckily obtained. She found it all that she expected, and all that her heart desired. It told glowingly of his unabated affections—of his anxiety to clasp her in his arms, and wound off by expressing his hope and expectation of being able to return some weeks sooner than he told her at their parting. After she had finished the perusal, and before any one else was stirring in the house, she seized her pen and wrote a hasty letter to Ashley, briefly relating all that had occurred since his departure, and imploring him, as he loved, as he would save her, to fly to her relief.

Soon after breakfast, May caught a glance of her new ally, coming, punctual to his appointment, carlessley fishing along up the brook to the old place of rendezvous, where he patiently awaited, behind the intervening shrubbery, the coming of his mistress, who soon found opportunity to steal away unobserved and approach him. Entrusting her letter to his care, to be given into the post-master's own hand, she informed David that she had determined to get a delay of the time set for the wedding long enough to allow Ashley to reach there previous to the day to which she was in hopes of getting the wedding postponed. This was her first resort; and if this failed, she must then make use of the means which last night's adventure had given her, for, as much as the delicacy of her feelings recoiled at becoming the public accuser of Gow of a crime in which she was fearful that Martin, and perhaps others, would be implicated, she believed this the only way then left her of averting the now doubly revolting destiny that awaited her. With this, and commissioning him to get some trifling articles at the village store, she dismissed her messenger with directions to repair to the same spot on his return.

At Martin's return to the house for his noon meal, May, feeling herself impelled by the necessity of immediate action, and making an effort to overcome her reluctance to any further negotiation with one who had acted so treacherously towards her, gave him to understand that she was acquainted with all the steps he had taken as preliminary to his bestowing her on Gow, and besought him and his wife, in the most moving terms, to relinquish their cruel purpose. But she besought them in vain. They replied only as she had anticipated, by now pleading not only her conditional promise, but what Martin termed her after consent, and insisted on her yielding without further ado. Perceiving any more entreaty on this point useless, she then begged a postponement for a few weeks. But this request received even less favour than the former; and although they had manifested no surprise when she apprized them of her knowledge of her publishment and the appointment of the day of wedding, believing, doubtless, she had heard it from some neighbour, and being well pleased probably that they had thus been saved the task of making to her an announcement which they knew must soon be made, and which they could hardly put on the face to make, although they had shown no surprise in this or her subsequent request, yet the moment she spoke of a delay, they started, exchanged glances of suspicion, and without assigning the least reason for refusing to listen to what would have been, on their assumption of Ashley's desertion,

neither dangerous to their purposes nor unreasonable in itself, pointedly denied her request, and in such bitterness of expression and unfeeling abuse, as drove her again in tears from the room.

"He will have it so," said May, after sitting awhile alone indulging in grief, and revolving in mind the different chances now left for her escape from the threatened fate; "there is no other way short of exposing Gow and bringing him to justice; and if it involves Martin, the fault is not mine—gladly, for all his baseness and cruelty, gladly would I save him from disgrace, and perhaps a prison, for having given me a home—once a kind home, however the bad passions may have since twisted his heart. But he will have it so; and now for the speediest method of bringing the character and crimes of that dark villain Gow to light."

Such was the stern resolution to which our heroine had reluctantly arrived. Gladly, as she said, would she, in remembrance of the past, and even in forgetfulness of the present, have averted from the head of her foster father the infamy which she had reason to believe would fall upon him in consequence of the measures she had now been driven to the alternative of adopting—joyfully have flown to him on her return from the mountain, imparted her discoveries, and thus have saved him and herself from the consequences of Gow's villany, had she believed him only to be the innocent dupe of the other's artifice. But this she could scarcely believe, for from the great intimacy obviously existing between the two, from the part Martin had taken relative to the forged letter, and from his character for intrigue, low cunning, and avarice, which she knew to be his leading traits, she drew the partially erroneous conclusion, that they were confederates, not only in entrapping her, but in coining money and duping their other associates. Under these circumstances, therefore, every measure of this kind she supposed would be useless, and might be the means of defeating her own objects.

Towards night shrewd David returned from the village, and his employer again met him alone at the usual place.

"Well, David, I have had more troubles since I saw you—I have entirely failed in my attempt to gain time—but you delivered the letter—and there was nothing in the office for me?"

"Yes! No!"

"O, if there could have been one! I did not much expect one, however; but did you remember my little errand?"

"The silk thread? Yes, Miss May, here it is in this paper."

May took the parcel from the boy, and opening it, disengaged the silk from the wrapper; the latter was a printed paper, and she listlessly began running over the contents, when she soon started, as if finding something which had caused her some sudden emotion.

"Where did you get this paper, David?" earnestly asked she, her eyes still riveted on the words before her.

"Why, the storekeeper puts it round the silk."

"Did he say where he obtained it? This is not such as they usually wrap their goods in, it is a printed handbill."

"Yes, I remembers now; he first says his wrapping paper's all out, then he goes to the door swung back inside, and tears down a paper and says, this has been here long enough, and wraps the silk in it."

"Do you know how it reads, David?"

"No! I never opens it; what is it, Miss May, that makes you look so queer about it?"

"Now, David," she continued, after reading the description of the thief's person, and the horse he had abducted, "now tell me, have you ever seen such a person as is here described?"

"Why," replied the boy, after dropping his head in thought, "why, I thinks he must be that mister's own brother, it's so like him."

"Nearer home than that—it is Gow himself!"

"By zounds!"

"Yes, I know more than you do about this," and she related the scene that she and her lover witnessed on Gow's first coming into the settlement.

"Sure, it is then," said the boy, musingly, after she had ended, "but does them what tells where he is get the money?"

"Some of it I presume, but this is little of my concern; those who will take him away shall be welcome to the reward, and as much more if I had it to give them. No, no, not for the reward, but to get rid of him is my anxiety. And I should prefer this way to any other for doing it, as it will take him at once out of the country, and involve nobody else. David, will you go again to the village to-morrow—take this to Mr Mundle, the sheriff, and without making use of my name, inform him the thief is here, and tell him where and how he may be taken?"

"I does it, by the pipers!"

"And if they do not come on immediately after him, come here to-morrow night after dark to inform me of your success."

The active little messenger, faithful to his trust, was at the village at an early hour the next day, and promptly seeking out Mundle, gave him the handbill, accompanying it with the information he was directed to give; but his communication was not received by the wary dea'er of rogues with such cordiality and such ready confidence as he and his mistress had anticipated. The sheriff, being one of those shrewd and cautious men who must understand the motives, and see himself all the springs of action producing any given measure before they make up any decided opinion concerning it, questioned the boy very closely relative to the causes of his coming; whether some one had not put him up to this through enmity to the accused, thinking it rather strange that this discovery should not have been made before concerning a man who had been in the settlement so many weeks, and who was, as the publishment of the preceding Sunday at the village meeting apprized him, about to be married into one of the principal families of the former place; and deeming a knowledge of all this essential to any reliance on the lad's story, he himself having never seen Gow, and Ashley, the only witness referred to, being absent. But in endeavouring to conceal the name of his employer, as she directed, and disdaining to misrepresent, David's answers became confused, and finally he refused to reply to any more questions, still reiterating, however, that he knew Gow was a villain, and the one who stole the horse, which, having been to the spot on his way to the village, he said might still be seen in the bed of the brook, where the body was thrown, in such a state of preservation as to enable one to identify sundry marks described in the handbill.

"I wish you would tell me, my lad," said the sheriff, musingly, "who is at the bottom of this; but you may have good reasons, after all, for your conduct, for I have often heard of you, when I have been up in the neighbourhood, as an honest, capable boy, and in a day or two I will inquire into this affair."

But David was not to be put off in this way. He still hung round the sheriff, and continued to urge his request to have something done immediately.

"Well, well, boy," said Mundle at length, wearied by the importunity of the former, "we may as well see what steps can be taken, if your story is true, now as ever, so go with me to Squire Johnson's."

They accordingly proceeded to the village justice, when the sheriff made known David's story, and the poor boy was again subjected to a close scrutiny by his honour, resulting, however, much the same as his previous examination. The justice and the sheriff then held a consultation apart, after which the latter came and told David that as Gow had never been arrested in New Hampshire, where the horse was stolen, it was their opinion that they had no authority to take him till they had written on and obtained a warrant there; but that as the justice thought he had once seen Gow in passing by Martin's some weeks before, and believed he would answer to the description of the handbill, they had concluded to go on with the business, which, if everything was kept still, might be brought about in a week or ten days; and that therefore he had better now go home, and, saying a syllable to no one on the subject, wait patiently for their movements.

"A whole week!" exclaimed David, with a look of disappointment and regret, "it will then be too late—t'other thing must be done."

"Why too late, my lad," asked both gentlemen at once, "why too late, and what other *thing* do you mean?"

"Why, I guesses I won't tell now—no, not till I sees first;" and so saying the boy turned on his heel and vanished, leaving his auditors greatly puzzled how to understand his singular conduct, and more than half inclined to believe his whole story a sheer fabrication.

Our heroine, who had hailed with pleasure this last measure, which had so unexpectedly opened for accomplishing in the least objectionable way her purposes, and who, confidently relying on success, had waited all day with trembling solicitude for the effect which she expected the communication of her messenger would immediately produce, listened with no small degree of pain and disappointment to the account which David gave her that night, after his return, of the failure of his mission, for failure it was as to all that regarded the main objects she had in view. Deeply did she regret, that not seeing the possibility of such a result, she had restricted the boy, whose prudence and sagacity would have otherwise prompted him to adopt her other measure in reserve; and bitterly did she now denounce that hesitation and false delicacy which had prevented her, after her visit to the cavern, from immediately taking the most efficient measures within her reach for effecting a purpose which she more and more became convinced her duty to herself, her lover, and to the public, alike loudly demanded at her hands; and she trembled to think that only one more business day intervened before the dreaded Tuesday, which, she began to fear, was destined to seal the doom of her wretchedness.

"Go, David," she said, "go early Monday morning again to the village, there is now no more time for doubts or delays; go, go, seek out Mundle and Johnson, tell them all; tell them that May Martin has been in the very den of these villains, overheard their plots, seen and handled their tools for counterfeiting, even found the false dollars they had made with them, and that she will not hesitate to swear to it all; tell them this, and whatever else they require and you know, and see if that will not arouse them to action; go, my faithful friend; everything now depends on you; I know you will not desert me now; go, and may heaven speed you."

The next day being Sunday, Gow visited Martin's. It was the first time May had seen him since her visit to the cavern, and she recoiled from his approach as from the touch of a viper, while she could scarcely keep her tongue from giving expression to the feelings of indignation and abhorrence with which his presence now more than ever filled her bosom. He did not long remain to add to her distress by his hated presence, for after a few fruitless trials to reconcile her to his attentions, he petulantly gave up the attempt, and departed to join his more congenial companion in their mountain retreat, leaving his intended victim, whom he now considered already secure in his toils without further effort, to count the slow and lingering hours which must pass before she could be cheered with the consciousness that something was doing to snatch her from her impending fate. Monday at last came, but with it, to the utter discomfiture of May, came a drenching rain storm, which she knew must prevent her messenger from proceeding on her mission. Often and vainly, during this gloomy day, did she strain her anxious eyes in gazing at the dark and impenetrable clouds to catch some sign of the storm's abating; but no such appearance greeted her sight. The rain continued to pour in ceaseless torrents, till night, closing in with Egyptian darkness, cut off all hope for the efforts of that day, and sent her once more to her cheerless pillow dejected, and fast beginning to despond of her extrication from the fate to which the current of events, in spite of her means of resisting it, appeared sweeping her on, and which the very elements themselves seemed combined to fix upon her. She did not, however, despair. She knew if David could go to the village in the morning, and succeed in rousing them there to immediate action, they would reach the settlement time enough for her rescue. At the worst she determined either to proclaim Gow's villany before the clergyman and assembled company, if matters came to that pass, and resist the proceeding of the ceremony on the spot; or secretly elope from the house, and fly to some friendly roof for protection. After a night of inexpressible anxiety and wretchedness, she started at the first dawning of the morning light from her perturbed slumbers, hastily rose, and went to the window. To her great joy the rain had wholly ceased, and the clouds that yesterday enveloped the earth like a shroud of mantling blackness, having now broken away and disappeared, had given place to a clear sky and a bland atmosphere. After standing awhile to let the soft and balmy breeze fan her feverish brow, she dressed herself and went down into the yard. Knowing it would be some time before

the inmates of the house would be likely to rise, and fearing that her little friend might not proceed on her mission without a fresh bidding, she slowly proceeded up the road towards his residence, which was in plain sight, about a quarter of a mile distant, with the hope that she might see him round the door to beckon to him to meet her. She had proceeded but a few rods, however, before she unexpectedly encountered him approaching.

"Where now, David?" she said; "I can hardly expect you have started out on my business so early. I was fearful you had forgotten it, and was coming to see if I could get a word with you before the folks were up."

"Forgets! that ain't David Butler—but how it rained yesterday! I ached all day to be a going."

"But have you really started for the village? How did you get away so very early?"

"Why, I tells you how it was—mother haunts me to know what for I goes all these times, and last night she promises to say nothing about it, so I tells her all—well, then, she gets into a taking—says Miss May is a poor injured orphan, and God will protect her. Then after she goes to bed, I hears her in the night crying again about it, and praying like. Then she gets up afore day and says she can't sleep, so gets me some breakfast and tells me to go right off."

"It was right, perhaps, David, that you should tell your mother, and I feel very grateful for her sympathy," said May, brushing away the tears that had started during this simple recital of the interest her wrongs had awakened in the bosom of her pious and unpretending neighbour, "but do you still feel willing to go and do as I last directed you?"

"I goes till I wears my feet off to my knees, to save Miss May for Mr Ashley," was the heroic reply.

"Go then—there may be time enough yet for all; go, my little friend, and may kind heaven grant you success."

CHAPTER XI.

We will now change the scene of our little story, which the events of this little day were destined to bring to a fearful termination.

On a road deeply embowered in the heavy forest, about fifteen miles south of the Harwood settlement, and half that distance from the village before mentioned, a solitary horseman, in the afternoon of the day so momentous to the fortunes of our heroine, was pursuing his lonely way towards the scenes we have just left. The day was one of uncommon sultriness even for the sultry month of August; and the traveller, occasionally plucking a fresh bough from the over-hanging branches to keep off the flies that were swarming around his vexed horse, and stinging him at times to madness, seemed to look with compassion on the foamy sides of the suffering animal, and often appeared to repress the involuntary motion which he frequently made to urge him forward at a quicker pace. "It is cruel," at length said the rider, seemingly addressing his horse, "it is cruel in me to force you on at this rate in this suffocating air, merely to gratify my selfish feelings—you have no loving and loved one in prospect to incite your steps to speed." So saying, he threw the reins loosely on to the dripping mane of the horse, and for the next mile amused himself with watching the flies, and endeavouring with a sort of malicious pleasure to strike down the most determined of their band, as these little winged tormentors were settling on their wincing victim, and often goading him into a trot.

Arriving now to where another road from the eastward fell into the one he was travelling, Ashley,—for such, as the reader has doubtless already anticipated, was our traveller, making his way to the settlement, and intending to take his mistress by an agreeable surprise, it being considerably sooner than she had reason to expect his return—Ashley, we say, at this point of intersection, was joined by another horseman. The man was considerably past the prime of life, and his hair, indeed, began to be slightly sprinkled by the frost of time; while his features, really handsome and commanding, wore something of the pensive and thoughtful cast. Bowing with the respectful ease peculiar to the well-bred, a class to which, from both his dress and demeanour, he very evidently belonged, he fell in by the side of Ashley.

"Our travelling fortunes seem to unite here," said the stranger, as a languid smile played gently on his lips.

"That smile," thought Ashley, "and those features too, seem familiar to me—I must have seen them or something like them somewhere, though certainly I know not this man;" and he mused awhile, but vainly, in trying to recal some more definite remembrance, or to account for the impression thus received. After some common-place conversation about roads, distances, and the like, the stranger observed,—

"From some of your remarks, sir, I am led to conclude that you are a resident somewhere in the vicinity—may I ask how far you proceed in this direction?"

"I am going to Harwood settlement, as the place is called—it is my residence, now something near twelve miles distant," replied Ashley.

"Indeed!" said the stranger, with evident interest, "I, too, propose going to that place."

"Do you?" asked the other, throwing an inquiring glance on his companion, as if conjecturing his probable business. "A proprietor of lands in the neighbourhood, I conclude we may call you, or perhaps about to become a purchaser?"

"Or perhaps a curious traveller in search of the novel and picturesque among your wild mountains," evasively said the stranger with a good-natured smile.

"That smile again!" said Ashley to himself; and he began to feel an undefinable interest growing in his bosom towards his new acquaintance.

"Do you know," resumed the elder traveller after a few moments' silence, "do you know a family in your settlement by the name of Martin?"

"Intimately," replied Ashley, with a look in which some surprise as well as inquiry was exhibited.

"Has he much of a family?"

"Rather small I should call it, sir—he has no children of his own."

"Of his own?—has he those of others living with him?"

Growing more and more surprised and sensitive at the inquiries of the stranger as they touched at every question nearer and nearer the great point of interest to his own feelings, Ashley, with visible emotion and some hesitation, replied, "There is a young lady living with Mr Martin in the character of an adopted daughter; or rather, that was the case when I left there about five weeks since."

"Her name and age if you will, sir?"

"They call her May, and after their family name—her age lacks some months of eighteen," again replied Ashley, in a somewhat constrained and half-jealous tone and manner, which the stranger seemed keenly to scrutinize.

"And this Martin removed hither from the borders of New Hampshire, where he formerly resided?"

"He did."

"The people there then told me correctly," said the stranger in an under tone, apparently communing with himself; "but," he continued, again raising his voice to a conversational pitch, and turning to Ashley, "but as you appear so familiar with the girl's age, &c., you may also be able to tell me something of her character, and the standing she maintains among you?"

"You would hardly ask those questions about May Martin, sir, if you had seen or heard much of her," said Ashley, somewhat resentfully. "I could easily answer them by merely reiterating the unanimous voice of her neighbours; but before you pursue your inquiries any further, or, at least, before you expect answers to such as you may be pleased to put on the subject, I must beg of you to tell me your motives for so doing. Miss Martin is a valued friend of mine, and is somewhat critically situated in the family in which she resides, and I know not what use may be made of the information I am thus imparting to an entire stranger. You will excuse my plainness, I trust, sir."

The other turned a full and searching look on Ashley, which was met by the latter by one of equal scrutiny and something of sternness and hauteur.

"You are right, probably, young gentleman," rejoined the elder traveller, after they had pursued their way some rods in constrained silence; "the interest we sometimes feel in a particular subject may lead us to forget the bounds which it is prudent and proper should circumscribe our intercourse with strangers; but we will drop the subject now, perhaps we may know more of each other hereafter."

Without allowing Ashley much chance to puzzle himself in trying to make out the character and objects of his companion, or to reflect on the remarks which had fallen from his lips, the latter immediately directed the discourse to indifferent subjects, and the conversation soon relapsed into its former tone of amicableness, though Ashley sometimes thought he could perceive an anxiety on the part of the other to draw out his information, as well as to ascertain his views and principles on the various points which there was some appearance of having been started for the purpose.

It was nearly five o'clock in the afternoon before our travellers arrived at the snug little village, which, like most other villages in Vermont, embosomed among the rough hills and clustered round a waterfall, served as the place of business and trade—the miniature emporium, in fact, of Harwood settlement, and other parts of the surrounding country to many miles in extent. One glance sufficed to tell Ashley that something of more than ordinary occurrence was afoot among the villagers. Here stood small clubs of men engaged in low and earnest conversation, there horses were being saddled and led out in haste, as if for some sudden expedition, while numbers were passing in and out the tavern, one room of which, as seen through the open windows, appeared to be occupied by a dense crowd. Scarcely had Ashley reached the ground and thrown the reins of his horse to a waiter, before shrewd David, running to his side and exclaiming, in tones of joyous exultation, "O, Mr Ashley is come!" grasped with convulsive eagerness the hand of his old friend in both of his, and burst into tears.

"Why, my little friend David! is this you here?—but crying! how is this? what has happened? and what is all this going on here?" rapidly asked Ashley in surprise.

"God bless you, Ashley!" cried Mundle, now rushing out of the house, "the very man of all others on earth I have been praying most to see! but come with me, I have a story for your ear, and there is not much time to be lost in the telling, as you will think yourself, I presume, when you have heard it." So saying, and taking the arm of our hero, bewildered at what he saw and heard, he led him aside, with little David wiping his eyes, and still unable to speak for his emotion, following them close at their heels.

While Ashley was thus engaged, his companion of the road had entered the rude piazza which ran along the front of the house, and seating himself on a bench, sat, apparently scanning the different faces around him, and listening to such remarks as fell within his hearing, as if willing to gather the cause of the commotion among the people, without concerning himself so far as to make any direct inquiries respecting it. He had not been seated here but a moment, however, before the former rushed by him into the house, and hastily bespoke a fresh horse of the landlord, to be saddled with all possible dispatch. The horse was almost instantly at the door; while Mundle, with a stout assistant, who in the meantime had got in readiness for a start, now rode up and called on Ashley to mount. As the latter was about springing into his saddle, his late travelling companion stepped quickly up and touched him on the arm.

"Do you leave me, sir?" said he with some earnestness.

"I must," was the quick reply; "I have just learned that which will urge me to the settlement much faster than you would wish to travel, but I shall see you there to-morrow—good day, sir."

"Nay, one moment—let me but ask whom your unexpected intelligence concerns?"

"Myself."

"No others?"

"One."

"The young lady concerning whom I inquired?"

"Most deeply."

"Enough—I attend you—landlord, my horse instantly."

"But your horse—he will hardly keep pace with our fresh ones."

"He shall at least try it, sir," said the stranger, in a determined tone, as he now received his horse from the expert waiter and sprang into the saddle.

In another moment the little cavalcade were clattering at full gallop up the road towards the settlement, followed by a waggon containing another assistant and shrewd David, with cords and iron hand-cuffs to bind and secure the prisoner or prisoners.

Before following them, we will pause an instant to bring up the events of our story as they occurred at the village before Ashley's unexpected arrival.

David, it seems, had proceeded directly to the village on leaving May that morning. On arriving there, still at a very early hour, he immediately went to search out Mundle and Johnson, the executive and judicial functionaries of the law to whom he applied on his previous visit to the village; but both of these gentlemen had just ridden out, and, to his great vexation, nobody could tell where they had gone, or when they would return. Without the least thought of yielding to this disappointment, the trusty little messenger awaited their coming many long hours in an agony of impatience and anxiety, and it was not till about noon that he caught sight of them approaching. He flew to meet and detain them on the road till they listened to his whole story.

"Well, my lad," said Mundle, after he had satisfied himself by many now readily answered inquiries, "you have told your story this time as you should do, to have us believe it; though I see you were not to blame for not doing so the other day—I have had some hints of this money-digging up there before, and suspected monkery; but good God! Johnson, would you have believed there could have been found a man in Vermont guilty of the baseness of Martin towards a girl who has all the claims of a daughter? Thank heaven, however, there is time enough yet to stop all this by just caging my gentleman bridegroom and his friend, before they dream of such accommodations. Come! on to our dinners—then make out a warrant, Johnson, in no time—I will be ready to take it before it is dry; and you, my boy, home with me—you deserve a dozen dinners for your faithfulness to that noble girl!"

After an hour spent in waiting for and eating his dinner, and another or two in looking up forms and writing a warrant, the dilatory justice was about bringing his labours to a close, when in came a merchant, holding in his hand a couple of counterfeit dollars, which he said had just been passed at his store by a man from Harwood settlement, and demanded a warrant for his apprehension before he left the place. Here was an interruption that was not to be avoided, and David, who had determined not to leave the ground till he saw the sheriff on his way, and who had watched the slow progress of the justice with the most restless impatience, as he now saw them drop the business which was his only concern, and proceed to this new case, lost all control of his feelings, and fairly cried with vexation and disappointment. After a while, however, which seemed another age to the poor boy, both warrants were finished, and the sheriff dispatched to arrest in the first place the last discovered candidate for his greeting favours. But though Mundle performed his duty much more expeditiously than the other, it was yet nearly five in the afternoon before he had secured the prisoner, placed him in the custody of others before the court at the tavern, and got released from his charge in order to proceed to the settlement, which he was just on the point of doing when Ashley rode up to the door.

We will now follow the sheriff and his posse, proceeding on with furious speed to a more interesting scene of action.

Proceeding with all the speed they could urge, being led on by Ashley, who, burning with impatience to reach the abode of his periled mistress before for ever too late, kept several rods in advance, calling loudly and repeatedly on the rest to come on, they had not gone half their distance before their horses, now reeking with sweat and covered with sheets of foam, began to manifest great distress, and show evident signs of giving out, unless speedily suffered to relax.

"Hold! hold up! Ashley," exclaimed Mundle, "this will never do—we gain nothing by it. With this speed, and in such a stifling heat as this, two miles more and our horses drop dead under us. And yours will be the first to fail—see how he already falters!" A moment's consideration convicted Ashley of the justice of the sheriff's remarks, and they all immediately relaxed into a moderate trot. It had been throughout, as before remarked, a day of unusual heat and sultriness. And now, although the sun had been for some hours obscured by a deep haze slowly gathering over it, the heat was still painfully oppressive. The atmosphere, indeed, seemed every moment to grow more murky and suffocating. Not a leaf, even of the ever-trembling aspen, responded to a single vibration of the deadened air, while the birds sat panting, listless, and mute on the boughs, scarcely moving at the nearest approach of man; and all nature seemed sunk into one of those lethargic calms so ominous, in the warmer lati-

tudes, of the coming tempest; nor, in the present instance, were the more palpable indications of a thunder storm much longer wanting. Every moment darker and broader sheets of vapour rose up majestically from the west, casting a deeper and more lurid shade over the earth, and soon the low, deep peals of muttering thunder came booming on the ear, increasing each instant in loudness and frequency.

The company, now beginning to be observant of the approaching shower, soon came on to the top of a high knoll, which gave them, over the tops of the intervening forest, an open and unobstructed view of the western horizon. One broad, black mass of upheaving clouds lay directly in front, extending round on either side to the north and south as far as the eye could reach; while in the centre of this fearful rack a huge column of vapour, doubling and eddying like a seething caldron, was rolling up with the blackness and rapidity of the smoke of burning pitch.

"Heavens and earth!" exclaimed Mundle, glancing at the scene before him, "in fifteen minutes that terrific cloud will burst upon us in all the fury of a tornado—it is but two miles now—our horses will stand it in this freshening breeze—let us clear the woods, at least, before the tempest strikes us." And they again applied whip and spur, and put their horses upon a keen run.

CHAPTER XII.

We must now return to our long-neglected heroine, to recount the occurrences of the day at Martin's. Slowly to her passed the anxious day which was destined to be the last for her ever being known by the name of May Martin. The forenoon was mostly occupied in making such scanty preparations as Mrs Martin chose to direct for the reception of the company at the expected ceremony in the evening. In all these May assisted with a sort of unnatural alacrity, but with as great a degree of composure as her troubled feelings would permit her to assume. As noon approached she expected every moment to hear the trampling of horses at the door as the fruits of her message, which she supposed must have been delivered hours before. Both noon and afternoon came, and still no tidings from the village were heard—no signs of either messenger or the success of his message were discoverable. Often and vainly did she strain her aching sight towards the woods in the direction whence the expected succour was to appear, to catch a glimpse of approaching horsemen. One o'clock, two, and three passed, and still they came not; perhaps they might have been led by David round in the woods to the cave without coming into the clearing—perhaps Gow was already secured, and on his way back to the village—and the thought, this hope-grasped thought, for a while relieved her; but even this faint gleam of consolation soon vanished by the appearance of Gow himself, come to dress and prepare for the ceremony. With a hint from Mrs Martin that it was time she had begun to dress herself for the company, May now retired to her room, and, carefully fastening the door, flung herself on her bed in an agony of grief and despair. But impelled by the painful consciousness that the crisis was at hand when she must yield to her fate, or speedily do something to avert it, and now fast relinquishing all hope in the success of the plan on which she had been relying for her extrication, she soon roused herself, and summoned all her energies for deciding what course to pursue on the fearful emergency. Could she trust herself to carry into effect one of the alternatives she had resolved on in failure of Gow's arrest—that of denouncing him and resisting the proceeding of the ceremony? Could she command her feelings sufficiently to do this? should she not be overawed by Martin and his wife? and even should she make the attempt, would her story gain credence after keeping so long silent, and suffering the affair to glide along to the very hour of consummation without making known her situation? The more she reflected on this project, the more did her resolution waver. She had a female friend who had not long since married and settled on the road a few miles north of Harwood settlement, and her resolution was soon formed to attempt to escape from the house and try to reach the residence of her friend that night. Scarce had she formed this resolution before, casting her eye up the road, she beheld in the distance a man approaching on horseback, whom, from the colour of his horse, she instantly recognized to be the minister who had been engaged to officiate on the occasion. She

had seen him pass the preceding Saturday on his way to a town a short distance to the north, where, at stated intervals, he preached; and she but too well knew the reason of his happening along on his return at this hour. Now aware that not another moment was to be lost, she seized a common bonnet, and cautiously letting herself down from the window, which opened into the garden, glided into the shrubbery, swift and noiseless as the wild bird stealing to its covert, slipped through the fence, and, entering a field of tall grain immediately beyond, escaped unseen towards the woods in a northerly direction. On reaching the woods she paused a moment to glance at the clouds, which were now beginning to heave up over the tops of the mountains in heavy masses, accompanied at intervals by the low, short, and scarcely perceptible rumbling of the distant thunder, affording her indubitable evidence of the approaching storm. But she hesitated not. What to her feelings were the terrors of a thunder storm to the scene she had just left, in which, but for her flight, she must soon be the principal actor? Pausing no longer than to decide how she should best shape her course to avoid all observation from the road and the open grounds on the right, and prevent becoming entangled or bewildered in the depths of the wilderness on the left, she now plunged into the woods, and keeping just within their borders, passed on with rapid steps towards her destination. She had not proceeded far, however, before the occasional rustling of bushes, and the crackling of sticks and brush breaking under the tread at some distance on her left, apprised her of the presence of some one apparently endeavouring to keep pace with her, for the purpose of dogging her steps; and soon catching a glimpse of his person in a glance over her shoulder, as with quickened steps she pursued her way, the alarming truth at once flashed across her mind—it was the accomplice of Gow, the old man she had seen in the cavern, who was following her. Calculating to leave the valley that night, he had packed up, and having come down from his retreat, was awaiting, at a convenient stand at the skirts of the woods, in plain sight of Martin's, a signal promised by Gow, as soon as the knot was fairly tied, intending to depart secretly from the settlement the moment this evidence of the completion of their infamous work was displayed: and it was while standing here concealed from the view of others in a clump of bushes, and patiently watching for the promised signal, that he caught sight of May gliding into the woods but a short distance below him. Though soon conjecturing, from the course she came, that it could be no other than their intended victim, he yet suspected not at first her real object; and, thinking she might have come to the wood for the purpose of obtaining some favourite shrub or evergreen to deck her room for the occasion, he suffered her to proceed some way before it occurred to him that she was actually escaping from their net. Unwilling, on account of his own safety, to cause any outcry, which he was fearful she might raise if he made any attempt to detain her by force, he determined to get a head of her and endeavour to frighten her back to the house; but in this he soon found himself baffled, for instead of being able to get before her, he found much difficulty, so rapid was her flight, even in overtaking and keeping her in sight. Resolving, however, not to lose the advantage of this, that he might dog her to the house where she fled for shelter for the night, and return and apprize his accomplice of the place of her refuge, he redoubled his exertions, and succeeded barely in accomplishing this part of his purpose as far as the pursuer and pursued were permitted to proceed.

But to return to the wretched fugitive. Having been nurtured among the mountains, and accustomed from infancy to exercise in their invigorating breezes, her naturally active limbs had acquired an elasticity, and a capability of enduring fatigue, which are unknown to females of older countries, and which came in good stead on the present occasion. Fleeing, like some frighted nymph of heathen fable before a pursuing demon, her lips parted, her hands thrust eagerly forward, and her loosened and disordered tresses streaming wildly behind her, she bounded along over log, rock, and rivulet, with a rapidity which fear only could have incited, and which the delirious energy of desperation alone could have sustained; while every glance which at times she hastily threw back over her shoulder at the fearful visage, for ever peering through the bushes in hot pursuit behind her, added a fresh impulse to her exertions and quickened her speed. The thunder now burst in terrific peals over her head—tall trees were uprooted and hurled to the earth by the furious blast, or shivered in the fiercely-quivering blaze of the lightning, fell in fragments around her, yet she paused not in her course; the rain poured in a deluging torrent over her drenched person, yet she heeded it not; but catching

the big drops in her parched lips as they gratefully beat over her fevered and burning brow, she fled on—on, regardless of all exposures, and forgetful of all dangers but one.

Having now passed the last house of the settlement, she, just as night and cloud were fast combining to spread their dark mantle over the earth, varied her course, and struck obliquely into the road. Here, pausing an instant in doubt whether to fly to the nearest house or go on in pursuance of her original determination, she indistinctly caught sight of the form of her pursuer, who had struck into the road some distance below her, and thus cut off her chance of return. Nerving herself once more for the trial, she pressed on up the road for her first destination, now about two miles distant, with no other means of distinguishing her way than what the occasional flashes of lightning afforded.

Although the rain immediately over her head had now sensibly abated, yet the deep, earth-jarring roar on the left, as if from the incessant pouring of a cataract, plainly told that the storm was still spending its force with unexampled fury on the mountains; and the proof of this soon became visible to our heroine in the rapidly increasing torrents that came rushing down the steep acclivities, overflowing the road and threatening at every step to put an entire stop to her progress. Arriving at length at the northern outlet of the valley, where the mountains shut down so close to the pond as to leave little more than space for the road to pass between them, she came abreast of one of the mountain ravines, where, at ordinary times, a small brook crossed the road; it was now swollen to a rushing river, before which no human strength could have stood an instant. To attempt to pass this she saw was but madness; and, as she heard the splashing footsteps of her pursuer but a short distance behind her, despair now, for the first time, sent its chill to her heart. But while standing on the brink of the dashing flood, which at every wave rose higher and higher, hesitating whether to commit herself to the raging element, or the scarcely less dreaded power of her pursuer, a flash of lightning revealed to her sight a shelving rock, jutting out from the side of the hill a few rods back, and so aloof from the road and screened from it by intervening boughs, as to afford her, she believed, if reached unseen, a good concealment from her indefatigable enemy, and a safe retreat from the waters, which were now rising around her with the most frightful rapidity. Making directly for the hill, and scrambling up the slanting rocks at the foot with the expiring energy of despair, she gained the place, and dropped down exhausted on the spot, just as another flash partially revealed to her sight the form of the old man hurrying by, and rushing up to the brink of the stream she had left but an instant before. Recoiling from the view of the threatening and impassable torrent, and throwing one wild glance around him, in which horror for the supposed fate of his victim, and alarm for his own safety, seemed equally mingled, he hastily retreated back along the road; but, before he had proceeded many rods, the gathering and pent waters above, as if suddenly bursting through their opposing barriers, in a mighty torrent came rushing down a corresponding ravine beyond the ridge a little distance to the south, and wholly cut off his retreat. Meanwhile, the noise on the mountain every moment grew louder and louder—the deep distant roar, as of pouring torrents, which had for some time been heard, now became mingled with the tumultuous crashing of falling forests—the hissing, swashing sounds of disturbed and changing volumes of water, and the slow, heavy, intermitting jar of vast bodies of water just beginning to move; nearer and nearer it came—and now the earth trembled and shook seemingly to its lowest foundations, as with gathering impetus the mighty mass came rolling down the steep sides of the mountain directly towards the spot where the terror-struck girl lay concealed, and her no less affrighted pursuer, a few yards below, was wildly running to and fro, vainly looking for some chance to escape. Anon it became rapidly light, as from some steady kindling blaze above, which, growing more luminous and dazzling every instant, soon gleaming fiercely along the surface of the bubbling pond, and flashing broad and bright over the opposite mountains, lit up the whole amphitheatre of encircling hills from the darkness of midnight to the splendours of noonday.* Starting upon her feet, May looked around her in mute consternation. Nearer and more deafening rose the tremendous din above her—roaring, crashing, grinding along, with the noise of ten thousand thunders, and with concussions that made the solid earth heave and bound beneath her feet, down, down came the avalanche with fearful velocity

* A steady bright light is generally produced by the concussion of rocks while the avalanche is in *motion.*

towards her. In another instant the mighty mass, dividing on the solid ledge beneath which she stood, began to rush by her on either side in two vast, high, turbid volumes, revolving monstrous stones, and hurling trees over trees in their progress; and like some huge launch, driving with amazing force into the receding waters of the pond; while at the same time the forest around and above her waved, shook, toppled, and fell in an awful crash on the rocks over her head. She saw, she heard no more, but sank stunned and senseless on the ground.

And, passing from the insensibility occasioned by the shock into a profound sleep, which, without a full recovering of her consciousness, immediately stole over her as her overstrained faculties ceased their exertion, she lay till the great struggle of the elements was over, and the storm passed by. At length, however, she slowly awoke. The dreadful tumult that last assailed her conscious ear was now hushed, and all was still, save the steady rushing of the diminished waters. The stars shone out brightly, giving her a dim view of the wild scenes of havoc and desolation which the fearful power of the avalanche had spread around her. The trunk of a large tree lay directly across the rocks within a few feet of her head. She saw how narrowly she had escaped death, and she devoutly thanked heaven for the preservation. A faint groan issuing from the ruins a short distance from where she lay, now reached her ear. It was the poor wretch who had caused all her trials, now lying wounded and buried beneath the top of the same tree that had spared his intended victim. But before she had time to indulge in the mingled emotions which this was bringing over her, she heard voices. Presently lights appeared on the pond, and a boat with several men shot along the shore directly against her. It now paused in its course, and some one repeated loudly her name. Did she hear rightly? Else why did the tones of that voice thrill through every fibre of her frame? She shrieked in reply, and tried to move, but her benumbed and worn limbs refused their office. The call came again, "May! May!"—"Oh, Ashley, Ashley!" she articulated in broken and agonised utterance. The men sprang on the shore, and in a moment more she was clasped in the mute embrace of her lover.

CHAPTER XIII.

Once more, and for the last time, change we the scene of our eventful story to the place where we commenced it, at the dwelling of the heartless, despicable, but now detected and self-abased Martin. Need we attempt to describe the disappointment of the excited and enraged lover, as, bursting into the house at the head of his companions just as the tempest struck it, he made the discovery which the inmates had made but a moment before, that his affianced was missing?—the utter discomfiture of Martin and his congenial helpmate at the unlooked-for interruption of their plans, and detection at the very eve of communicating their business?—the consternation of Gow at being seized and securely ironed on the spot?—the bitter upbraidings heaped by Ashley on the heads of the guilty and shrinking pair for their treachery towards him, and their oppressive cruelty and wickedness towards the unprotected child of their adoption?—the feverish impatience with which he paced the floor till the storm should abate, that he might fly to the neighbours, to some of whom it was supposed the poor girl had fled for refuge?—the hot haste with which he mounted his horse the first moment the fury of the tempest would permit, and rode from house to house in the eager search? the blank dismay and agony of heart that overwhelmed him on finding that no one had seen her, and that she was sheltered by no house in the settlement?—the prompt rallying of the startled inhabitants—the dancing of lights in every direction as they anxiously continued the search in house and barn, field and forest, through the gloomy hours of that dreadful night?—the consternation of the distracted lover on coming to the frightful ruins of the avalanche, and the maddening thought she might be buried beneath them?—his hasty return and procurement of a boat to pass round the insurmountable mass that blocked up the road?—the extacy of joy that thrilled his bosom at the discovery of the lost one, and the exulting throb of heart-gushing happiness with which he and his companion bore back the living prize, together with the dying wretch who had caused her misfortunes, to the nearest house for resuscitation and refreshment before proceeding homeward? Need we attempt to detail all this? What reader of imagination so dull that he cannot better fill up for himself a picture so difficult for pen to delineate?

It was daylight, and a beautiful and balmy morning. The scene from Martin's presented in every direction a gloomy picture of the desolating ravages of the tempest. Fields of grass and grain lay prostrate with the earth. Fences on every side had been swept away by the unexampled rise of the mountain rivulets, and their scattered materials lay strewn at random over the blackened herbage of every vale. Each solitary tree of the open grounds, left for shade or ornament, had been hurled to the earth in the fury of the blast; and many a veteran hemlock and princely pine of the surrounding forests, whose giant forms had withstood the power of the elements for centuries, and whose towering tops had served from time immemorial as the familiar guides of the woodsmen starting from their homes, had been rent by the lightning, or overthrown by the winds, and were no longer to be seen; while far in the blue distance at the north a broad whitish belt marked the fearful track of the avalanche down the mountain.

Within the walls of the house was assembled a group of persons as variant and dissimilar in character and feelings as the singular causes that brought them together. On a low bench in one corner of the room, sullen and silent, sat Gow, heavily ironed and closely guarded by one of the stout, atheletic assistants of the sheriff. In another place sat Martin and his wife with their eyes cast dejectedly on the floor, listening meekly and with deep abasement of demeanor to the remarks of the clergyman, who, having remained through the night, was now mildly setting before them not only the wrong of the deception which had been practised upon him in hiding the circumstances of the projected marriage, in the advancement of which he had been so unwittingly enlisted, but the great heinousness of using such arts to compel a poor unfriended orphan under their protection to violate the vows to her lover which they themselves had sanctioned, and wed a man so abhorrent to her feelings that she had braved, and but too probably met death in trying to avoid the fate. Leaning pensively against the window, stood the handsome stranger, who yesterday joined Ashley on the road, and who, though no one yet knew his business or even name, had through the whole night taken a deep and active interest in the search for the lost favourite of the valley, now listening to the words of the minister addressed to the humble dupes of the man in irons before them, and now casting wistful and uneasy glances through the window towards the north, in which direction he, as well as all the rest of the present company, supposed the search was still going on.

Presently a distant hum, as of the mingled voices of many persons approaching with rapid steps down the road, reached the ears of the company. It came nearer and nearer; and all, except Gow and his guard, now hastily rose and went out into the yard. A band of all ages and sexes, scattered confusedly along the road, according to their different powers and disposition for speed, were flying towards the house, headed by shrewd David many rods in advance, exultingly shouting with all his might, "May is found! May is found! They are coming! they are coming!" And the little fellow now reaching the anxiously expectant group at the door, and pointing to two approaching waggons in the distance, fell down in utter exhaustion, and gave vent to his overflowing emotions in a burst of tears.

Thank God!" exclaimed the stranger, the first to find utterance in the general emotion that seemed to spread sympathetically from the boy to every person present.

"Amen—and to Him be the praise!" responded the minister in the deep and reverential tones of his office.

The foremost waggon travelled much faster than the other, and being considerably forward of it, had by this time approached to within a short distance of the assembled company, now composed of nearly all the inhabitants of the settlement, awaiting its arrival in breathless silence. And now it turned into the yard. It contained Ashley and the recovered fair one. She looked worn, and much paler than usual, otherwise calm though thoughtful. Her lover lifted her from the carriage, and advancing with her at his side, would have spoken, but his lips began to quiver, and waving his hand mutely, presented her to the company. The females rushed round, and by turns convulsively clasped her in their arms, or buried their faces in her bosom, with no other utterance than that which their violent sobbing as they held her in their mute embrace, or turned away to hide their streaming tears, afforded. The men stood by and looked on with less boisterous manifestations of emotion, though the big *tears were* seen starting in many an eye, and coursing down many a manly cheek, as they

silently gazed on the moving scene before them. While this scene was acting, the other waggon driven by Mundle, and containing the wounded man stretched on a bed in the bottom of the vehicle, the latter person having been brought here by his own earnest request, now slowly passed into the yard.

"Bring out a few pillows or something to make a bolster," said the sheriff, in the tones of one accustomed to command; "this poor wretch is very evidently near his last breath, and has something to say before he leaves the world for ever. Here! help to lift him out, bed and all. And bring out likewise the prisoner Gow, that they may be confronted together."

These orders being promptly attended to, the wounded man was carefully lifted from the waggon, and placed in an easy position in the open air. He first pressed his hand to his forehead, and then opening his eyes, and looking slowly round on the countenances of those standing immediately about him, said faintly,

"I heard them say there was a stranger here, who had inquired for May Martin, and seemed to take an interest in her fate. Is he now present?"

The gentleman thus inquired for, who had hitherto stood back a silent though attentive spectator of all that had passed, now stepped forward.

"It is so," said the former, after letting his languid eye rest a moment on the face of the stranger, "it is even as I suspected—Mr Harwood—Frank Harwood."

"You call my name, sir," replied the stranger, closely scanning the pale and livid features of the man lying before him; "you call me rightly, but I do not now recollect where or when I may have met with you."

"Do you not remember your father's former agent for this settlement, and the adviser and assistant of your youthful errors?"

"Colvin!" exclaimed the stranger in surprise, "Colvin!—can this be Richard Colvin?"

At the mention of that name all the oldest settlers stepped up and bending over the man, looked intently in his face.

"It is," they presently exclaimed, "it is Colvin, but oh how changed!"

"You say truly," rejoined the older man after a pause, in which he seemed to be collecting his failing energies to speak further. "You say truly of the wretched object before you—changed indeed, but less changed in person than in guilt. Franklin Harwood, in May Martin, the girl before you, behold your own daughter!"

"My father!" uttered May in surprise.

"Her father!" exclaimed many voices at once.

"Her father! Frank Harwood, only son of the old proprietor, her father!" almost shrieked both Martin and his wife at the same instant.

"Can this gentleman be my father?" again timidly asked May, looking inquiringly to Ashley.

"It is the gentleman of whom I spoke as we came along, May," replied the latter. "I thought—I half suspected something like this. And why not of so near a tie? See!" he continued with animation, waving his hand to the spectators, and pointing from the features of the father to those of the daughter—"see! did ever mirror that mellows while it truly reflects the landscape—did ever mirror throw back the softened picture more faithfully?"

"It is even so," said Harwood, now stepping up and taking the hand of the unresisting and pleased girl. "It is even so—it can be no other than the too long neglected child of a much injured though lawfully wedded mother, who, I trust, at this auspicious moment, is looking down, from her place in heaven, to forgive and bless, in the pleased witnessing of this late union of father and daughter. And if she," he continued with an affectionate smile, "if she of heaven can do this, what says my fair child of earth?"

A sweet smile broke through the starting tears of the daughter in reply.

"Let me proceed," said the wounded penitent; "I know—I feel that I have but a few more moments left me, and I would improve them in undoing, as far as I can, the mischief I have done—I now grieve to say, deliberately done. You, men and owners as you have thought yourselves, of this settlement, you more than others, in my dark career of crime, have I injured. Under pretended ownership of this valley, I gave you false and worthless titles to the lands which you now occupy, and which till within a few months belonged to this gentleman's father, who, having become apprised of his son's former clandestine marriage

and a living offspring somewhere in Vermont, bequeathed them all before his death, as I accidentally learned, to this abused and persecuted girl. Would to heaven I had remained ignorant of the fact, for it led to my second offence against you. Not content with having once defrauded you out of the price of your farms, and proved treacherous to my patron to whom I represented these lands to be so worthless, that he on this account, and owing to family troubles and growing infirmities, never afterwards inquired about them or employed others to look them up—not content with this double fraud, I had laid a second plan to rob you of all these farms at a blow, or make you pay for them again, by getting them into the possession of my associate and young pupil in crime, yon prisoner, by means of cheating the unconscious owner into a marriage with him before the will should become known here, or she apprised of her true parentage and standing, and thus inflict another irreparable injury on the worthy family of my early patron. Nor was this enough for me—I must filch a large sum of money from a number of you in making you pay my associate and equal sharer in all the booty gained or to be gained by our wicked plots, for his pretended skill in helping you to discover a fancied treasure, for the effecting of which I scrupled not to expose you to the law by burying for your finding a few counterfeit dollars of my own make. And now having confessed all, the only atonement I can offer for my aggravated injuries is in declaring the innocence of the deluded men in possessing the false coin, and in restoring the good money taken from them; my share of which you will find in my pocket—the rest about the person of the prisoner, who, I hope, will speedily forget the lessons of wickedness I have taught him, and learn wisdom from my melancholy fate. And as to your land, I can only recommend you to the mercy of their now rightful owner, or Mr Harwood, her natural guardian, or," he continued, glancing at Ashley, "or him who, I suppose, is soon to be her legal protector."

"It is but right," said Ashley, stammering and confused at the evident allusion of the last speaker, and endeavouring to withdraw his arm from his fair partner, "it is but right—but honourable, that, in this strangely altered aspect of affairs, I should relinquish to Miss Harwood, as we must now call her, all claims she may have given me as May Martin."

"But supposing," replied May, still clinging to the arm of her lover with a countenance radiant with smiles and blushes, "but supposing Miss Harwoood should not choose to release Mr Ashley from his engagements to May Martin?"

"At least, May," rejoined her lover, with a starting tear and grateful smile, "at least, May, we have a new consent to ask and obtain now."

"And it will not long be withheld," said Harwood, with a gratified look. "Your manly conduct now, Mr Ashley, has confirmed the highly favourable prepossessions I have conceived of your character, and even without this, I know not that I should ever have attempted to sunder those whom God has so evidently put together."

While this tender scene was enacting, most of the settlers, astonished and dismayed at the unexpected intelligence they had just heard, which had swept away their farms at a blow, had withdrawn from the spot in silence, and were standing in the background with blank and disconcerted countenances, leaving the happy little group of father, daughter, lover, parson, sheriff, and little David, about the only persons whose interests were not unfavourably affected by the development, by themselves, indulging in the joyous emotions to which the occasion gave rise, and the three last-named especially, giving vent to their feelings in pious ejaculations, hearty congratulations, and half-suppressed exclamations of unbounded delight, according to their respective characters. Their attention was now arrested by a faint groan from the old man. They turned—he had just breathed his last. The falling of some body, followed by the loud shriek of a female within the house, now suddenly struck upon their startled ears. All rushed to the open door—Martin lay weltering in his blood on the floor, with his throat cut from ear to ear, and writhing in the agonies of a death which, in a paroxysm of remorse, shame, and desperation, his own hand had inflicted.

CONCLUSION.

Ten years had rolled away, when one day a meek-looking and plainly dressed stranger, on horseback, was seen [illegible]ting air turning into the same yard where the closing scene

of our tale took place. A large two-story building, with corresponding out-houses, now occupied the former site of Martin's dwelling. A sturdy young farmer, of perhaps twenty-five, was in the now improved and handsome yard, teaching two ruddy-faced little boys, of the probable ages of six and eight years, how to shoot with bow and arrow.

"May I ask who at present resides here?" timidly asked the stranger.

"Judge Ashley," was the free reply.

"And these pretty boys—are they his?"

"They are, sir."

"I once knew something of the people of this valley, and I trust I shall be excused for making some inquiries concerning them. How is Mr Ashley esteemed in the world?"

"Estoemed—humph!—the very first man in the country."

"And your name—may I ask it?"

"Certainly; David Butler—never ashamed to tell it in my life."

"And have you not a farm too, by this time, from your own earnings?"

"Hardly—from my own earnings—and yet I have a lot of the finest wild land in the settlement, and I'll tell you how queerly I got it. You know—that is, if you've heard of it—that about ten years ago there was a sort of upturning here, and change of owners. Well, Mrs Ashley that now is, God bless her noble heart! gave me this lot outright for services she fancies I did her at the time of this *fracas*—I could tell you all about it, but I suppose you have heard of the money digging affair, and what then happened?"

"I have—what happened at the time, but not after. What became of the old occupants who then lost their farms?"

"Why Martin, you see, being the best judge of what he deserved, like a sensible man, cut his throat on the spot; and the judge and his wife thought, considering it would be no more than a fair shake to take his farm, after helping off his sweet widow, two of the money diggers ran away more scared than hurt, and their farms were also taken; and as to the rest, the judge let them off easy, paying them for their improvements as much as their whole farms were worth, 'twas said. Well he could afford to do it, for all the wild lands of the valley fell to him; besides, his father-in-law, dying soon after, left him all his property—that is, about half of it, giving the rest to the charities. And now, sir, seeing you have rather a free knack of asking questions yourself, supposing I ask you one? What is your name?"

"Do you not recollect me?"

"Why—no—and yet it seems to me I have seen your mortal phiz somewhere."

"You once had good reason to remember me, and I wish I could say with you that I have never been ashamed of my name—I am Gow."

"Gow! Gow! that same Gow? who—o—o—rah! Yes, that I have had reason to remember you—your coming brought me that righteous lot of land which I would be at work on to-day, if the Judge would consent to let me leave him. Yes, yes, you made my fortune if the devil did send you—but what in all nature has brought you back again?"

"Better motives, Mr Butler, I trust, than those which once led me here. Are Mr and Mrs Ashley in the house? I would see them at the door for one moment."

"Halloo! halloo the house! Judge Ashley and lady, halloo!"

A middle-aged gentleman, with a political newspaper in his hand, and looking a little testy at being interrupted in his reading, hastily came to the door. A handsome young matron, some years younger than her husband, with a chubby, black-eyed infant in her arms, made her appearance a little in the rear of the latter.

"What now, David? is the house on fire, or what, that you make such an outcry?"

"Why, here is one of the seven wonders of the world!—do you know that gentleman?"

The lady shuddered, and shrinking back a step, whispered something in her husband's ear.

"It can't be!" said the latter, a slight frown passing over his brow.

"My name is Gow," said the stranger, riding up to the door without offering to dismount. "You are Mr and Mrs Ashley, I believe. She, I perceive, knows me; and well may she remember me and my former injuries. And for that reason have I presumed to call at your door. I ask not to enter, for I am unworthy—and yet, for myself, perhaps, I should be thankful that I was once directed to this spot, for the lesson here received in the awful death of my

associates in crime, and my long imprisonment that followed, were the means, I trust, of plucking me as a brand from the burning. For many years I have been an unworthy preacher of the gospel, labouring in the far west. Returning once more, and for the last time, to visit my native New England, I have come some distance out of my course to see you—to perform a duty to you and to my own soul—to ask that forgiveness which my God, I humbly hope, has extended to one so utterly unworthy of his mercies. Can you, sir, forgive all the injuries I intended to you?"

"Freely," replied Ashley, visibly touched at the deep abasement of the other; "freely, from my heart, most freely!"

"And you, dear lady, you, have yet more to forgive!"

"If you, sir," said she, "have the forgiveness of God and my husband, it shall not long be said that you lack the forgiveness of Mrs Ashley for an offence committed against May Martin—you have it sincerely."

"Dismount, sir," said the Judge; "walk in and dine with us."

"Nay, it may not be—it may not be, worthy people. However we may forgive, or even respect, there may yet be associations connected with individuals, which must render their presence for ever painful. It were better that I tarried not; but ere I leave," he continued, riding up close to the door-step on which the couple now stood, and extending his hands, "I would take a hand of each in token of peace, and as the seal of forgiveness."

His request being complied with, he lifted his tearful eyes to heaven and ejaculated in broken utterance—

"O, my Father above, who could forgive me, the vilest of the vile, and bless one so utterly sinful and lost, wilt thou bless and prosper these thy servants—their little ones, and all that is theirs—not only in the things of this life, but in that light and love which is here our only durable happiness, and hereafter our heaven."

Casting one long and mournful look on the happy pair, and bowing a mute farewell, he slowly rode away, and was seen no more.

THE END.

THE

GIPSY OF THE ABRUZZO.

BY

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CHAPTER I.

THE hot south-east wind had prevailed all day, and cast gloom and languor over the lovely valley of Salmona—a spot worthy of having given birth to the amiable Naso, that immortal poet, whose glowing imagination has so truly painted those "charming agonies of love, whose misery delights."

It was near to that spot, still known to the peasantry as La Bottega d'Ovidio, that the young Donna Constanza stayed her eager palfrey to let him drink of the limpid stream of Gli Fonte d'Amore. Notwithstanding the sickening oppression of the malaria, now fast pervading the heated breeze, the flush of hope and happiness sat upon the maiden's brow, and the smile of youthful joy played around her pouting lips. While her horse sucked up the cooling draught, a voice from beneath called out in low but musical tones:—

"Gentil' Donna," two several times, before she could recognise whence it proceeded. "Gentil' Donna," said the voice, a third time, "fling a ducat on the margin of Gli Fonte d'Amore, and I'll read you your fortune." The lady now discerned the speaker, where he lay stretched at full length beneath the thick olive that shaded one side of the spring. "This is no hour to have fortune read," replied the donna; "but here's a gold zechino for thy good wishes, for truly never did I need fortune more. Here, Andreas, rein up thy steed, and bear the coin to him."—"Touch it not, Messer Andreas," sharply cried the first speaker, addressing the waiting servitor, "'twill blister thy fingers else." Andreas instinctively started from the proffered gold; the speaker laughed, and in a softened tone continued:—

"Fling it thou upon the flowery turf, made ever verdant by the waters of Gli Fonte d'Amore; fling it freely down, and thy love, lady, shall never know cross again." A deep suffusion passed over the cheek of Constanza. "The baron is in sight, Donna," announced Andreas. "Then let us ride on," she replied, as, with a look that seemed to say, I would hear more if occasion suited, she flung the coin towards the prophet, and giving her spirited palfrey the rein, she galloped lightly on towards the Castello. "Your fortune is read *molto beato*, and may your star never shine less brightly than at this hour," cried the man, springing up, and displaying the well-known equipment of the Zingaro—one of a race half bandit, half gipsy, who were at this period thickly located about the wild mountain tract lying between Isernia and Popoli, and extending from the lake of Celano across the Maronne and Matesse. In his hand he bore a staff full nine feet long—this was his only apparent weapon; from his neck hung a rudely formed guitar, a long hair-net constrained his luxuriant black locks, and a large leafed hat lay back upon his shoulders, sustained by a narrow leather strap passed across his *forehead*. His nether man was clad in loose breeches of d[illegible] cotton,

drawn tight below the knee; a greave-shaped leathern gaiter covered his leg nearly to the ancle, where it was met by the lacing of the rude sandal, which barely protected the sole of the foot. A short closely fitted jerkin of deer-skin, and a very large *capa* of coarse black cloth, completed the wardrobe of the very picturesque-looking youth, who, leaning on his staff, watched the receding figure of the beautiful Constanza. There was a yellowish tint in his complexion, which would have given a sickly character to the countenance, but that it was more than counteracted by the lustrous brightness of his large black eyes, the redness of his lips, and a set of teeth which, from their strength and whiteness, seemed formed for eternity. In figure he was about the middle height; his limbs light and long, denoting both strength and elasticity.

As the cortège of the baron drew near, the youth thus minutely described moved round the spring, and having picked from the turf the piece of gold, rapidly darted away; and by the aid of his pole, readily clearing the many streams which intersected the meadow, made for the olive-grove, which covered one side of the steep hill leading to the Castello.

This was the day of the festival of the patron saint of the monastery of the Annunziata, and, in despite of the sirocco, the Baron de Mirialva had attended the ceremony in company with his niece. They had left the castle at day-break, and were now returning from the monastery, accompanied by some of the neighbouring nobility. It was on this day, in the church of the Annunziata, Constanza had recovered the smiles stolen from her brow, ever since the hour her uncle first announced the feud which separated her from Lugi Conradini, her long-affianced and heart-chosen lord. It was from the hand of a mendicant palmer, to whom she tendered alms, in the gloomy aisles of the church, she received the electric touch which imparted new life to her heart. It was from beneath that pilgrim's hood the glances shot, which had kindled anew the fire of joy in her eyes; and it was to read the letter of love, hidden next her boating heart, whose lines, indeed, were to decide her fate, that she now spurred homeward so freely, heedless of the heat of sun or air. The same day was far advanced, when the gipsy stood close before the noble gate of the Castell de Mirialva, and whilst tuning his guitar, the wanderer's constant recommendation, disturbed the rest of the pampered porter who sat within its shade. "Peace, and quit thy thrumming, rogue; thou canst not expect to steal aught here," growled the unmusical servitor; "what wouldst thou?"—"Something to eat, and somewhere to shelter me within these ample walls," replied the youth sadly; "see you the threatening storm?"—"Diavolo, Zingaro!" rejoined the porter, "thou must have profited little by thy being up, if a coming storm or a night's lying in the air, with a grey stone pillow and sky-coloured coverlid, can give thee much care."—"But, charity, good Signor Castellan!"—"Aye, aye, I am charitable to the real necessitoso, even to overflowing, and give abundantly to the worthy fathers of San Dominico. The convent of Monte Garigliano is hardly a league lower down, and if thou usest lightly those long legs of thine, thou mayest yet cross the torrent before the mountain-waters find their way there. The holy fathers are excellent judges of the proper objects of compassion; go, tinkle thy guitar at their gate, and see if thy Zingaro ditties may win thee straw and a supper. Ho, ho! Pah! that puff of malaria was the very breath of Satan; the true blast of the sirocco—away, rogue!' Off from the portal, and let me close out thy ill-breathing and thy master, the devil's, together—it will not harm thee, 'tis thy native air; so good night, poveretto."—"The malaria be your only breathing, son of a ban-dog, until your bloated form be as black and as foul as the heart within it," muttered the repulsed suppliant, as he turned from the closely-barred portal of the Castello, and fixed his eyes upon the mighty masses of cloud now fast descending on every side, obscuring the close of day, and creating a premature night, by colouring every object with their sickly saffron hue, only contrasted by the fiery glare of the vivid lightning, shot at intervals from their laden bosoms. A few heavy rain-drops, splashing upon the hard and thirsty soil, gave note of the coming storm, and promised a speedy termination to the sirocco that had blown all day. Though it was late, the birds, by a sudden quick, and lively note, seemed to offer up thanks to the God of nature for the relief about to be afforded them. The leaves of the olive, too, emitted a gentle rustling sound, as if eager to court the coming gale, that with cool breath began already to puff back the baleful blast, under whose withering influence all beneath the sky had seemed to droop and sicken. "'Twill be a heavy fall, and soon too," muttered the gipsy as, after a moment's observation he leaned upon his staff and glanced about him; "and not a chance of shelter,

except I crawl like a hound under some projection of these walls, upon which my curse should light, but that I watched the fair form of her who flung me this zechino gallop lightly beneath them. Gold, humph! if I were in a city now, this would win me supper and shelter from Christian or Pagan, but of what use is it upon the mountain? A thousand such pieces would not bribe yon over-laden cloud to bear its waters a league further, and leave me in a dry skin. No! man alone knows its influence, and the ring of this tiny bit of yellow metal would thrill even to the heart of the churl who now bars me in the storm,—would even charm him to change hands and touch cup with the Zingaro. Sformato! if ever we meet on the mountain, I'll read thee a true fortune; aye, and see to its fulfilment too, even as near to the end of thy life as may well be with safety."

The glance that accompanied this promise fully vouched for the sincerity of the speaker, who now pulled over his brows the large leafed hat which had hitherto lain upon his shoulders, drew the hanging part of his hair-net tightly under his throat, and folding his coarse capa closely about his person, seemed fully prepared to abide the pitiless pelting of the coming maestro, as with a quick and stealthy pace he turned the leeward angle of the Casa.

CHAPTER II.

'Twas about the second hour of the morning, the storm had done its errand and was passed away, and the dome of heaven shewed clear and unclouded. The cool breeze blew freshly, and formed a singular contrast to the dull and suffocating wind that had prevailed during the preceding day; the deep shadows of the Castello were flung far down the side of the hill upon which it was reared, and the only sound that broke on Nature's repose was the distant roar of the swollen waters of the Pescara. A tall and stately cavalier was eagerly climbing the most precipitate part of the hill, over which hung a large projecting window; he halted as he arrived beneath it, and after gazing in silence for an instant, eagerly unwound his scarf and waved it to and fro in the air. "No," he at length murmured, in a tone of bitter disappointment, "there is no hope; the light has long been extinguished, and she has despaired of my coming. I would I had plunged into the torrent that detained me—death would have been less painful than the eternal misery of hope delayed. Could I yet apprise her that I am here without noise—but how? Stephano is with the horses, and I could as soon scale the Duomo as reach that cursed window—I would give a thousand ducats to see it fairly opened."—"A bargain, Signor Cavaliero," was at once whispered, in a clear and distinct, though low tone, which seemed to rise close from beneath the signor's feet; he cast his eyes downwards, and observed, rolled up in a coin of the buttress, immediately under shelter of the window, a dark-looking mass, from out of which a pair of twinkling eyes were fixed intensely upon him.

"Who art thou?" he demanded fiercely, "lying coiled up there like the lynx of the Abruzzo? Come forth quickly, and show thy form and errand, or I'll unkennel thee else with the point of my spada."—"Don't do that, signor," again whispered the voice; "don't do that, for when tickled I have an ugly trick of laughing loud enough to be heard at a round league, and listeners might choose to seek out the joke sooner than you could be prepared to join in it."—"Come forth, sirrah knave, and fear not; only inform me what thou hast been doing in that lair, and why there at all."—"Veramente, signor, I am here for lack of better shelter, and have been doing what I still had done but for your coming—sleeping sound, as the cat sleeps. My ear is quick, signor, and my eye is quicker. I know you, Luigi Conradini, and could guess your present business here, aye, and could help you to do it into the bargain."—"And what are you, that read me this riddle?"—"One who lives by riddles—a Zingaro," answered the speaker, rising nimbly to his full height, and shaking about him the folds of his capa.

"Ha! methinks I have seen thy face before, friend!"—"And I am sure I have seen yours, signor. Zingaro never yet forgot the face of friend or foe."—"Am I, then, to conclude myself recognized as the former, since you so readily proffer service?"—"Not more promptly, signor, than you extended it to me twelve months agone this very day, in the wood of Venafro, when the king's hounds turned off the trail of the deer to nose me, where I lay *perdu* under a tree, watching the chase, and the chasseurs were going to hang me up as a scare-crow for throwing them out—aye, and but for your prompt word had done it too. Now, signor, what can I do to repay the obligation? Fear not to trust me, I am your's to the death;

vengeance, should be *senza limito.*"—"I fear me, Zingaro, that thy service, though honestly and freely proffered, may little avail me in this strait, unless thou hast wit to conjure me into yonder window, or give warning in a whisper to her, who no longer watches, that he whom she loves is here."—"Humph! both may be contrived, and without the aid of the devil, if you, signor, can afford to part with a portion of your dignity, and, putting forth the native strength of your manhood, so become my bearer for a brief space."—"I do not rightly comprehend; but fear not my compliance, if thou canst but make it appear that by bearing thee I may enter into yon chamber—but pshaw! the thing has no likelihood; that window is a good twenty feet from the ground we tread on."—"Ha, ha! I have scaled a higher wall to rob a meal of flour from the Fornajo, and for the wealth and beauty that await thee!—*Animo*, Luigi Conradina! stand on this bench; so—why, there's two feet less distance between thee and thy mistress already. Now take this pole, and drive the iron point into the opposite buttress with all thy might, and as high above head as may be; strike manfully for thy lady's love." The count raised his arm, and the point of the staff was buried between the huge stones. "Well stricken, signor," cried the gipsy; "now lend me that silken scarf; elevate thine arms to the uttermost,—so; now hold firm the pole, and stand fast, for my limbs may be periled if thine fail."

Agilely springing upon Conte Luigi's shoulders, the gipsy next stepped lightly upon the tough pole, which the lover with his vigorous arms bore above his head, pressing against the point which rested in the opposite wall; once at this elevation, he dexterously threw the scarf round one of the frightfully carved heads which projected, by way of ornament, from the ends of the beams that supported the window, and seemed to grin defiance on all below; this done, to twist the two parts of the scarf together, and climb up by shifting his hands alternately one over the other with the lightness and nimbleness of a marmot, was the work of a moment. He tried the casement—it yielded to the touch, and the long-desired haven stood open before the anxiously watching lover of Constanza, who, making a sign to his assistant, quickly drew from his cloak a light but strong ladder of silken cordage, and flinging up one end to be hooked to the window's edge, fastened the other to the rude bench below, and promptly mounting, entered the chamber.

"The thousand ducats are mine," whispered the gipsy-boy in the ear of the count.—"They will not be the moiety of thy reward," answered Conradini eagerly, "if I this night succeed in my hopes."—"Basta, signor," rejoined the successful climber, "let me first rub out the debt contracted in the forest of Venafro before we begin a new score."—"This apartment," continued the count, "is one of the suite occupied by Constanza; her dressing-room should be somewhere near the window on the right hand. Ah! during our days of happiness, I knew well each turning in these apartments; and did the good old marchese, her father, still live, I need not now be seeking my affianced bride by night, and in darkness, as a thief seeks his prey."—"Why, I fancy I feel more at home in the darkness than you do, signor," interrupted the gipsy, as they felt along the wall. "Ha! perchance here is the very door; a light within too!—by your leave, Messer Key, all is well; Eccola, signor, condescend to place your eye here and behold her whom you seek." The count instinctively obeyed. It was indeed Constanza; she was still equipped as if for the saddle, except that she had thrown aside her hat and plume. Her beautiful countenance was suffused with the tears still falling upon an open letter that lay upon the table before her, and with whose contents she was intensely occupied. A half-uttered exclamation from the count reached her ear; she listened with doubling eagerness; a low tap was next heard on the door, and "Constanza" was softly whispered, in those tones in which none ever breathed her name, save only one. She started on to her feet, and gazed timidly around, passing her hand across her forehead. The next moment she had flung wide the chamber-door, and the swart form of the Zingaro stood before her. She saw no more—a wild piercing scream burst from her lips, and covering her face with her hands, she sank senseless into the arms of her betrothed husband, Luigi Conradini.

"Diavolo! signor, was it your looks or mine that so terrified the donna?"—"We are lost!" exclaimed the count, "lost beyond hope; her loud scream must have alarmed the household, and my life will be the sacrifice to her guardian uncle's anger and revenge."—"Nay, then," cried his companion, "resign thy senseless prize, and let us two fly; 'tis ill arguing [illegible] thy guardian on his own ground."—"Not so, but do thou leave me, good

fellow; take this purse and fly; for myself, I will abide the worst, and die rather than again be separated from her for whom alone I wish to live." A distant noise, as of approaching footsteps, was now heard. The Zingaro paused for a moment, as he quietly put aside the proffered gold; he cast his eyes on the senseless form of Constanza, over which the count fondly hung; then, as if suddenly having resolved and decided on his course, he exclaimed, taking the hand of the lady,—"I this day read you a fair fortune, Donna, and it must be fulfilled. Take up your mistress, signor, and bear her down the ladder."—"'Tis useless, worthy fellow; already I hear the sound of advancing feet at the end of the corridor: we should be pursued and seized ere I could bear this dear burthen half way down the hill to where my good horses wait."—"You shall not be pursued. I will remain behind, will close down the window, lead them on a wrong scent, and so win you ample time. Away, come!"—"How! you remain! but your life will——"—"I know, I know, signor, my neck will be put in some jeopardy, but that is an every-day venture; if I 'scape, so—if not, at worse, hanging is the natural death of our race, and I am already some twelve months older than I should have been but for your interference—so I owe you a death. Ha! they are getting impatient without, so courage, signor; the fresh air revives her already. There, throw your cloak round her—let her not again get sight of my face to terrify her anew. Ha, ha, ha! I never judged before it was so forbidding to the sex." A violent hammering was now heard on the outer door of the corridor, together with the baron's voice ordering it to be broken down. The count and his lovely prize were by this time at the foot of the ladder—he looked back to the gipsy, and urged him to descend. "Down with thee, my brave lad, and try thy fortune with us."—"You were lost if I did that," answered the youth coolly.—"Adieu, Luigi Conradini. Tell the donna 'twas I who yesterday read her fortune by the waters of Gli Fonti d'Amor. And hark! should the aged of our race ever cross your path, fling a coin in their way for my sake, and confess that the gratitude of lo Zingaro is *senza limito*." He closed the window with the last word, and softly entering the chamber of Constanza, had just time to secure the lock, when the outer door was burst open and the baron appeared, surrounded by a crowd of half-dressed domestics, who all eagerly pressed forward, alarmed at the thought of their young lady's danger.

"All here is quiet," said the baron, after looking about him for a moment; "are you sure it was the Donna Constanza's voice you heard, calling for help?"—"Per certo, signor," answered a domestic, "and when I first listened at the outer door I heard more than one voice whispering in this very room."—"And I," said another, "heard the most fearful scream."—"Scream! several screams you mean, or heaven mend your hearing," added a third.—"Peace, knaves!" said the baron, as he knocked at his niece's chamber. All were silent, but no answer was returned. Repeating his summons in a louder key, he next called upon her within but to assure him of her safety—still echo was his only reply. "The girl has not surely been mad enough to attempt her life for love of that foolish boy to whom her father in his dotage betrothed her? Here, Jocope, try thy hammer on this door."

This command was immediately followed by a storm of blows upon the door, under which, after a gallant resistance, the stout cedar at length gave way, and the hallowed sanctuary of beauty lay open to the profanation of the vulgar gaze. The domestics hung back, from a mingled feeling of respect and apprehension, and the baron alone entered the chamber. All within bore testimony to the taste and elegance of the inhabitant, but showed not any sign of violence, or even discomposure. Upon the table stood an extinguished taper, and near it lay the guitar and music, last touched by the fair hand of Constanza. A velvet curtain hung before the recess in which stood her couch; this was lowered, and as the baron gently drew it aside he perceived the bed was occupied. "This," he cried in astonishment, "is most strange, surely the wilful girl is moon-struck. Constanza—answer me, Constanza!" he repeated, striking the coverlid violently with his hand. "Nay, this foolery is too much for patience; therefore bring lights here, knaves. Fair lady, by your leave—for your face I will see, and your voice I will hear, ere I sleep again."—"You must ride hard, or watch long, then, grandissimo," cried the occupant, rising up as the baron laid his hand upon the bed. The attendants rolled back upon each other in affright—even the stout Mirialva recoiled as if he had touched a torpedo. Well might the nerves of the Donna Constanza quail beneath the glance of the Zingaro as he now appeared. His capa was discoloured by the red soil he

had so long lain upon; his long elfin locks, escaped from their thraldom during the storm, hung in wild disorder about his face, whilst his eyes, full of the excitement that stirred within him, blazed with an almost unearthly brightness.

"Devil!" exclaimed the baron, after recovering from the surprise of this most unexpected vision, "what has led thy fiend-like carcase to so unfitting a resting-place?"—"The stars," was the prompt reply, uttered with an oracular wave of the hand; "the stars, which govern and decide our destinies, and with whose mighty influence it were as vain to contend as to puff a feather against the raging blast of the maestro, or stay the determined will of woman's first love."—"Dog of a cursed breed! thou shalt find it was an evil star led thee to thrust thy handy-work between me and my will. Where is my niece? Speak! hast thou murdered her?"—"The blood of woman never yet followed blow of mine,—nor ever did the lust of gold lead me to thrust my will between her and her heart's choice."—"Peace, slave! Answer thou my questioning, and utter word more or less than to that end, and I'll have thy saucy tongue torn from its foul root. Thou canst tell the course she has taken?"—"Ay, if you once put me upon her track, my eye is keen enough to distinguish the light foot of a lady from the spur of the lynx."—"Who is her companion?"—"At this minute it would be wild to swear that; some time has passed since I last saw her, and women at the best are variable in their fancies."—"Holy Mother! the unblest churl juggles with my patience. Ho, there! drag this foul carrion from out the bed; strip the deer's hide from his back, and lash him till he learn straight speech." On the gipsy's being hauled from the couch, and placed upright on the floor, his limbs apparently refused their wonted service, and he at once sunk down like a thing wholly bereft of bone and muscle; this dogged and passive resistance being the only opposition he thought fit to offer, he was quickly raised upon the shoulders of four stout fellows, and borne to the hall, where, still refusing to stand, his jerkin was slashed with knives from his back, and with such little care that blood was seen to follow more than one blade. In this work, Jocope, the surley porter, was conspicuously officious.

"We'll make it more difficult for you to stand ere we're done dealing on your swart hide!" whispered the fellow, as he assisted in dragging the prisoner's arms round the marble pillar they were made to embrace. When bound, with the upper part of his body exposed and naked for the lash, Jocope approached him, armed with a heavy whip. "I owe thee my service, son of Satan," he whispered in his victim's ear. "What! thou wouldst have tricked me into taking thee under shelter of the Castello, to cut our throats, as well as spirit away my young lady, eh! But for once thou hadst to deal with thy master."—"Thou didst deal wisely in barring me out, truly, Spietato!" replied the gipsy, with a bitter smile of triumph. "Lay on and spare not!" impatiently cried the baron, and he seated himself to see the cruel order fully carried into effect. The stalwart arm of the ruffian porter plied his instrument of torture with such coolness and skill, that a streak of red marked the course of every lash. With eyes and teeth firmly compressed, and without suffering a groan to escape him, the wretched youth bore for a while his punishment; even the fiercely exerted strength of his torturer began to flag, when turning his eyes towards the baron, the sufferer cried, "Hold!" At a sign the next blow was suspended. "What, hast thou found thy tongue?" demanded Mirialva.—"And how am I to be benefited by using it according to your will?"—"Thou shalt have a couch of straw, and bread and water till to-morrow; then a strong cord and a fair spring from the top of the castle-gate."—"Hum! fair offers and tempting! What if I still keep silence?"—"Thou shalt be now flogged as near to thy death as may be done on this holy Sabbath morn,' sternly replied Mirialva, "and on the morrow shall await thee a like punishment, to be continued until thy dark spirit be dismissed to the hell it sprung from."—"Umph! unbind me," calmly said the gipsy. "I choose straw and a supper, the long cord and a free spring; but hold! you will not, after squeezing me dry, put me again under the lash?"—"I have promised thee respite until Monday morn—wilt thou not take the word of a Roman baron?"—"As readily as you would take Zingaro oath, sworn on the rood. Touch with your lips the cross of your dagger, and on it swear to keep faith with me, or my lips are again sealed, and for ever!"—"Unbelieving miscreant!" exclaimed the baron, starting in rage from his seat; "I am well enough minded to put thy stoutness to the proof." Prudence, however, and the desire of a nobler victim for revenge, overruled this momentary burst of passion. *Making, therefore,* the prescribed oath, he again took his seat.

"A draught of water to moisten my parched throat, and my cloak to cover my shame, and then your questions, signor, I am ready to answer." Water was brought, and the capa thrown upon his lacerated shoulders. He calmly drew his cloak about him, and bowed slightly, in token of being prepared; the baron began:—

"Who was the contriver and companion of my niece's flight?"—"The husband chosen by her father, the Count Luigi Conradini."—"Há! is it so? And how gained he access to her chamber?"—"That service I contrived for him."—The baron cast a glance of deathful import on the unflinching speaker, then went on. "Knowest thou where they now be?"—"With willing minds, sharp spurs, and stout steeds, they may now be well nigh across the Pettorano."—"Then they are bound for Naples?"—"For Naples."—"Now art thou a lying knave; for mortal man dare not venture to cross the Pescara after the rain of last night."—"The Count Luigi had already crossed it, though somewhat later than he had looked to do; a delay that had well nigh lost him his fair prize."—"May its swollen waters 'whelm them both, and for ever!" cried the baron, as he started and rapidly paced the hall. "Ho, there! to horse, some of you; hasten to the river, and see if it be yet fordable; look close for the new track of horses, and ride upon the spur; a thousand ducats to him who brings back my niece, or can show me a blade dyed with the heart's blood of Luigi Conradini. Take hence that hound, bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the tapestried chamber at the extremity of my gallery; let him have bread and water, and straw to lie on. If thy story be true, and the torrent fordable, I will keep faith with thee, and on the morrow thou shalt have a strong cord, and die the death of thy fathers; but if thou hast spoken a lie, thou shalt be whipped until thy false heart be laid bare to the sun, whose beams shall wither it within thee."—"By the star that rules me, I have spoken truly, Baron Mirialva." The clatter of the departing horsemen was now heard, as they hastily spurred over the paved court.

"Ha, ha, ha! they must ride and spare not, who seek to win back time past, or true lovers flown," continued the Zingaro, as he was led from the hall to his prison-chamber. During the foregoing events, time had held on his unchangeable course; and as the prisoner was thrust into his last earthly lodging, he was saluted by the first burst of a bright morning sun, darting its many-coloured rays through the stained glass of a narrow window, placed high over head, and indeed the only means of supplying with either light or air this gloomy chamber. The Zingaro gazed for a moment at the cheerful light, half shading his brow with his hand; then, turning to his guards, he requested that they would place him within the influence of its beam.

"Ay, to be sure," was the reply: "Nicola, toss down that straw there; the poor devil wants to sun himself."—"He's no judge of astronomy, then," answered the bearer of straw, "or he'd have known that the rays of the morning sun will rest but a short space where they now fall: no, no, poor ignorant, if thou wouldst have the sun for company, I'll put thy straw in yonder nook, where he will sleep awhile after mid-day."—"Put it down here," said the Zingaro, adhering to the same spot; "'tis not his noon-beam I would watch, for that I shall never see again; no, 'tis his earliest light on the morrow I would fain give greeting to, that I may know how near is the hour of my end as I watch my last sun rise."—"O, that's it," replied the astronomer; "then even so be it—have thy bed where thou wilt. But methinks thine is an odd fancy; now I, though naturally of an inquiring turn, am no way curious about seeing my last sun rise, and don't care, in troth, if I never see it at all, so I live the longer—but every man to his humour: so there. But, by your leave, we must bind your hands and legs, for you Zingari are but slippery subjects; however, with this little precaution, and without outlet, except for a weasel, through yon window, I think thou may'st be trusted. Now thou'rt fast, here's thy bread and water; at night-fall I'll not fail to bring thee a fresh supply; and, unless thou hast stomach for a right early breakfast, thy turn of eating may be then considered pretty well served for this world. 'Tisn't every man that's doomed to the dog's death that meets such gentle fare or soft lodging; but a bargain's a bargain, and thou'lt find the baron a man of his word; so, till night, rest in peace, honest pagan. Come, comrades, leave the Zingaro to his repose; there's no fear of his being troubled with nightmares, for he won't lie much on his back, I guess—ha, ha, ha!"

Amidst the loud laughter this jest created, the door was firmly secured without, and the subject of this brutal mirth was left alone. The tapestried chamber was a large square apart-

ment, never used but for one melancholy service,—that of guarding the mortal remains of the Lords of Mirialva during their brief passage from the death-bed to the tomb. In this chamber was prepared the last display of earthly vanity attendant upon departed greatness; here was laid out in all the impotence of lifeless clay the once mighty lord of a thousand vassals. The room was, in conformity with its sad purpose, hung round with black tapestry, that had once, no doubt, been of exquisite workmanship; but, from age and neglect, it was now torn in many places, and in others hung loose from the wall. With the exception of the high window described above, a stout oaken door, leading into a gallery belonging to the baron's apartments, was the only outlet; a more secure or melancholy prison, therefore, could not easily have been imagined; a like conviction appeared to enter on the prisoner's mind, for after a keen and searching glance around him, which, as he gazed on his own fettered limbs, settled at length into a look of fixed despair,—"The slaves," he exclaimed, "have bound my hands so straightly, that the food they have thrown me is useless, for nor hand nor foot can I stir. The hypocrites would not hang on their Sabbath, but think it no sin to scourge and starve. But 'tis no matter; I need not much strength to hang, and there is, I fancy, no hope of respite or escape; so good day, fair sun! and welcome be thy first ray to-morrow!" So saying, the captive turned himself composedly upon his straw, and enjoyed, hungry and lacerated as he was, a sounder sleep than visited the pillow of "thrice driven down," pressed by the proud baron who thirsted for his blood. Carlette Mirialva was the younger brother of the late marchese, and the inheritor of his titles and estates; early plunged in dissipation and overwhelmed with debt, the latter he had anticipated long before his brother's death, and consequently, when this event took place, he had little to avail himself of but the empty title. Before the death of the marchese, everything had been arranged between him and the father of Conradini for the marriage of their children; it was postponed only by the illness of the marchese, and with his dying breath he enjoined the fulfilment of his pledge upon his brother. This, however, would have ill suited the views of the needy gamester. The Castell di Mirialva, and the property in the Abruzzo, formed the inheritance of Constanza in right of her mother; and this must have been necessarily given up to her husband upon her marriage, leaving the proud baron houseless, or compelling him to avow his folly, and rest dependant on his niece's bounty until time should pay his debts, and again make him master of his own ample domains. His first act, therefore, on his brother's death, was to refuse his consent to the fulfilment of the marriage contract, unless it were stipulated that he should be left master of this domain for so many years. Luigi and Constanza were too far gone in love not to have agreed readily to his wishes; but not so the elder Conradini; he, with the prudence attendant on his age, and the indignation natural to a high mind, replied by spurning the unworthy proposal in no measured terms. An open and violent rupture was the immediate consequence, which threatened, in the end, to sunder the lovers for ever; for Constanza was but seventeen, and the laws left her at her uncle's disposal until she should attain the age of three-and-twenty, a century in true love's calendar. Many months had elapsed since this disagreement, and numerous were the suitors introduced by the baron for his own purposes, and rejected by Constanza with a firmness well worthy her name.

At length the festival of the Annunziata enabled Conradini, in the disguise of a mendicant palmer, to communicate to her his wishes, and his plans for their execution; and so well did he describe, in his letter, the present misery of separation, and the risks he had run in vain to see or communicate with her; and in such bright colours did he contrast the happiness and security awaiting them in flight, and in the fulfilment of a marriage already plighted before Heaven, and sanctified in their hearts, that Constanza, on that very night, heedless of the storm which raged without, had frankly obeyed the directions of her lover, and, like another hero, placed a light in her turret window, at once to be the guide to his steps, and the token of her own readiness to follow them. It has already been told how the swollen Pescara detained her eager deliverer, until mortified and wearied, she, two hours after midnight, withdrew her beacon, and abandoned herself to grief—grief soon changed by the embrace of her long banished Luigi. This retrospective detail will at once explain the baron's cause for rage, and his eager thirst for vengeance, not only on the Conradini, but on the humbler agent of his loss, the luckless Zingaro, whom no laws of the time either acknowledged or protected. His wretched race were left, like the wild animals of the

rude country they inhabited, to roam at large through their desert, and like them too, were liable to be hunted to the death by any noble sportsman who might choose, at his own proper peril, to follow such diversion.

Anxiously did the Baron di Mirialva count each minute of that Sabbath morn, that holy Sabbath, ordained as a day of repose both from the toils and passions of frail nature—a day wisely sanctified and set apart for reflection and repentance. But far otherwise were employed the thoughts of Mirialva; intensely did he listen to each sound, eager to catch the footfall of returning horse; constantly were his strained eyes fixed on the approach from the banks of the Hescara, whilst his heart was consuming within him, fired by the demons, Avarice, Anger, and Revenge. A horseman at length appeared, whose hard-spurred, jaded steed could hardly bear its rider up the steep. The baron flew to the gate to meet him—with the hellish hope in his heart, and the wish on his lip, he demanded,—"Well, have they been tracked? have ye overtaken the runagates? is *he* dead? Say yes, and boldly claim the promised thousand ducats, and more, thy lord's eternal favour."—The vassal hung his head in silence. One by one the wearied riders returned, with no better success, till at last but one remained out, on whom to rest a hope. But the baron knew well the nature of the hound that still hung upon the track, and whilst Jocope returned not, he did not entirely abandon his demon-like hope. Right well this worthy servant merited the confidence of such a master; patient, wearilesa, and true to the scent of blood, as the hound of whose savage nature he so largely partook, he, though outstripped and baffled, still hunted on, a dogged instinct his guide, and the promised gold his spur.

CHAPTER III.

The shades of evening had once more fallen upon the valleys of the Abruzzo, before the Zingaro was re-awakened to a sense of pain and hunger. As he slowly turned upon his straw, he cast his eyes upwards on the now almost darkened window; suddenly a gleam of wild and unrestrained joy lighted up his pallid and worn features—his sight became rivetted to the object, as he cried aloud—

"'Tis there! 'tis there! It shines bright and dazzling upon me, unclouded and serene, the star of my birth and the guide of our race. I saw it twinkling thus in my past dream of freedom. Hail to thee, herald of hope! Thou didst shine thus lightly upon me, as, but now, in sleep, I sat again by our mountain stream, with Zea by my side; and once more listened to her sweet voice, as it rose in thy praise, attuned to the guitar she best loves to hear! Thou art still above me, shining star, and I am not forsaken! Thou art still unclouded, and I will not despair, for never wouldst thou rise so brightly at eve, were a son of thy people to die the cruel death ere thy setting."—With the spirit of new-born hope did the captive now await the approach of his jailer, as he heard the massy bolts withdfawn; for, true to his promise, Nicola again stood beside him, bearing a fresh allowance of bread and water.—"Why, how's this," said the man, observing the former supply still remaining, "thy food and drink untouched? Mass, but thou art somewhat dainty in thy fare, or hast a marvellous gift of long fasting. Why hast thou not broken bread, Zingaro? thy hanging to-morrow will be none the more agreeable because thou art some pounds the lighter; why, man, thoul't be as hard to die as a cat; eat and drink, and prepare for thy ending as like a good christian as one of thy doomed breed can."—"How can I do either?" bitterly replied the prisoner; "your food is left but as a mockery, when my lips might parch for a drop of water, ere I, thus tightly bound, could moisten them. What fear you, that you thus pinion me? Escape were impossible, unless I had wings like a bird, and no more bulk than a shadow; for otherwise I could neither reach nor pass out of yonder window."—"Why, there is some reason in that," rejoined the jailer, glancing round; "and though the baron ordered thee to be bound, he also intended thou should'st eat, or else he had ne'er promised thee food—so, by our Ladye, I'll strain my warrantry and loose thy cords a trifle—and more, thou shalt have the bottom of my wine flask to give a whet to thy appetite.—There! with two feet between hand and hand, a man may do much, with a hungry stomach and good will—thou need'st not thy feet to help thy feeding, so we'll let them be; and if they feel somewhat tight-laced, why console thee, 'tis but a few

hours, and then thou may'st kick away with them like an unbroken colt—ha, ha, ha! Nay, never lour at my joke, man—thou relishest the smack of the wine though, ha? Well, finish it then, and welcome, for now we're alone, between thee and me and the wall, I owe thee no ill-will for helping the lady Constanza to the man she liked, and am not sorry the young birds have shown them such strong wing."—"The horsemen have then returned?" demanded the Zingaro.—"Aye, come back empty-handed; all but one, and he'll get little but wrung withers and dirty boots for his ride, I guess."—"Who is he that still hangs on the track of his lord's daughter?"—"Who but Jocope, the porter," said Nicola; "and as for hanging, by the mass, for the gold that's promised he'd hang a slip knot round the neck of the brother that twined at birth with him."—While the jailer thus indulged his gossiping propensity, the Zingaro eagerly continued to eat and drink; and as from time to time his dark eye flashed upwards, it would kindle with hope revived, and reveal a thousand thick-coming fancies of liberty and vengeance. In a few moments Nicola rose to depart.

"Adieu till morn, Zingaro," he said; "eat thy last supper, and sleep soundly; fear not to be awakened in *hanging* time—ha, ha, ha! Nay, no anger at my jest! thou would'st like well enough to list to it this time to-morrow."—The door again closed; the bolts again jarred on the ear, and the Zingaro was once more alone. But he was no longer the inanimate log that for so many hours had lain without exhibiting one sign of life or motion; but alert, active, and stirring, with a glance like the hawk, and with vigour and ingenuity equal to his will. First, with the assistance of his teeth, he managed to spread before him his capa, and then, from a secret pouch within its folds, he drew forth the hidden implements for procuring light, which ever formed a part of his *matériel*—quickly and skilfully using his partially freed hands, he succeeded in the first part of his attempt; when holding over the light the bonds which confined his wrists, he sat, partially feeding the flame, until the stout cords gave way. His hands thus free, he waved them in triumph and thanksgiving towards the star, still shining brightly upon him; and in an incredibly short space of time he, by similar process, freed his feet from bondage, though not without some suffering from the flames. As the last turn of the lashing was unwound, he sprung from the floor, and attempted to stand erect, but the cramped trembling joints failed to support him, and he fell back powerless upon his straw; by degrees, however, he restored the circulation to his benumbed and sore scorched limbs, until they once more became capable of their wonted exertion. As the night advanced he boldly proceeded in his plan. First, tearing down a large portion of the tapestry, he passed his hands along the walls of his prison; on three sides his views were opposed by solid stone; the fourth he discovered, with confirmed hope, to be of stout wainscot. But whither did the next room beyond lead to? or by whom might it now be occupied? Could nature support the dense smoke that must attend his attempt to burn a passage through here, for the escape of which smoke not an outlet existed, excepting the window high overhead, any effort to break which would alarm the yet wakeful inhabitants of the castell before his purpose could be half effected. Then came the more horrid suggestion, might he not, ere the stout oak gave way before the flames, himself perish miserably, tortured by a vain dream of freedom, whilst his limbs withered within the folds of the terrible agent whose aid he was about to invoke? These, and a thousand other fearful imaginings, swept through the prisoner's mind, as he busily collected a portion of his straw, together with some of the dry and mouldering tapestry, so as to form a heap of combustibles immediately beneath the wainscot. Thus prepared ere he applied the light, he again fixed his eyes upon the window, as if he expected from the star of his wild faith some evident and visible sign to direct him. He now looked in vain; the star shone no longer upon him. For a moment a shade of doubt clouded his brow, ere he interpreted this change: then bending low his head he cried—

"Thou art gone; thou wilt no longer let thy free rays linger within these thrice accursed walls of stone—thou art gone to light up the dark mountain and the silver stream, and thou callest on thy son to follow thy free course, or die;—ever blessed star of my fathers, be thou obeyed!"—As he concluded, he again bowed low his head with a solemn earnestness of voice and manner, that fully bespoke his ardent faith in the strange creed he held. He touched with his light a selected portion of the straw, and the flame rose fiercely against the sturdy wainscot, that seemed in its strength to defy the puny effort. The Zingaro patiently sat

crouching upon his hams, and from time to time carefully fed the slow fire, which, by degrees, gave certain evidence of its subtle and insidious power upon the surface of the blistering, blackened oak.

A little while longer, and the wainscot began itself to assist in its own destruction: the bluish flame that at first had but flickered for a moment unsteadily and by fits upon its surface, seemed all at once to fix its hold with a tenacity not to be again shook off, and in a moment after it rushed in fierce triumph over the hissing wood.

The smoke became dense, even to suffocation: nevertheless, stretched at full length with his face close to the floor, the Zingaro continued for a long time to endure this suffering, as he carefully fed and directed the flames, which, to his hopes, gave promise of freedom; but at length the heat and smoke combined might no longer be borne with life. Thus made reckless of the consequences, he suddenly started up, and seizing the vessel which contained his supply of water, he aimed it against the lofty window: the immediate shiver of falling glass which followed, bespoke the success of his effort, whilst the huge mass of smoke, lifting itself quickly upwards, left the floor comparatively free for breathing.—The dangerous consequences which had made him so long defer this moment, as he foresaw, almost immediately followed. First was heard the buzz of many mingled voices, gathering in the court below, to mark the thick smoke as it rolled through the broken window: then followed an eager cry for the keys of the tapestried chamber. Not an instant was to be lost; and no sooner did the prisoner hear these sounds, than gathering together the stout cords which had bound his feet and hands, he with their aid firmly secured the door inside; a work barely accomplished before he heard the quick tread of feet, and the hasty withdrawing of bolts; the heavy lock next turned in its wards, and an attempt was made to thrust open the door.—"Santa Maria! 'tis fast within," cried a voice the prisoner recognised for Nicola's: "'tis the body of the poor Zingaro, doubtless, that has fallen against it—push stoutly together, lads"—but the door again withstood their united efforts. "Get axe and hammer quickly some of you," continued Nicola; "the fire is certainly here; 'twas never a spark from my lamp surely when I took the lad his supper. Ring out the great bell; call up my lord the baron, or he will be burned in his bed else, like the poor heathen within, whose flesh I can plainly hear sputtering like chestnuts a-roasting."—A succession of sturdy blows rebounded from the entrance, and immediately the Zingaro tried with his feet to force the crackling wainscot, but it refused to give way. How to gain more time? already the door was rent from its hinges and had been down, but that the assailants had retreated from the first burst of smoke, calling loudly for water. The Zingaro saw at once that now or never came the decisive moment—gathering therefore the remainder of his straw and other fuel, he quickly heaped it before the forced door, and just as this was falling inwards, he flung a blazing mass upon the ready pile—a wall of fire, in an instant supplied the place of the barrier just beaten down, and the terrified water bearers ran from the spot, with cries of horror, as they caught a glimpse of the dark form beyond which appeared to move calmly and untouched amidst the blaze. In a few moments the fallen door began to add fresh fuel to the fire; the great bell, too, rung out the awful sound of flame. Drunk with the smoke, and maddened with the pain of his half-burned hands, the Zingaro also prepared for his last desperate effort. He covered his head and shoulders with thickened folds of his capa, retired a few paces from the now smouldering wainscot, then, rousing his whole force for the attempt, he rushed forward and dashed himself sideways against it. The half-burned boards burst before his weight, and whelmed amidst the blazing ruin, he rolled into the next apartment. Shaking the burning embers from about him, he hurried across the unoccupied and unfurnished room, and opening the door, entered the passage beyond. On the instant a voice arrested his step.

"Who art thou?" demanded a man, advancing hastily from an adjoining door, holding high a lamp;—"why am I thus rudely aroused, and whence this peal of wild alarm?" The Zingaro turned upon the inquirer, and the light flashed upon his face. Had the master-fiend himself, clothed in all his terrors, met Mirialva's sight—for he was the speaker—he could not have looked more dismayed than he now did as he gazed upon his late prisoner, blackened with smoke, and with garments glowing from the sparks of fire which still clung to them.—"What demon art thou?" again demanded the baron, as he stepped back towards the nearly closed door of the room just left by his sentenced prisoner, "speak!"—Demoniac indeed was the look the gipsy cast upon his proud foe as with a voice of thunder he shouted,—"Lo Zin-

garo!" Then bounding forward with a tiger-spring he dashed the bewildered baron into the apartment, already half filled with flames, and closing the door quickly drew the bolts. He then turned into Mirialva's now vacant bed-chamber, tore from the sumptuous couch and windows the silken cords which draped the curtains, and by their aid descended with speed and safety into the private garden of the castello.—Already flames were bursting from the closely barred windows of the room which held the wretched Mirialva. The Zingaro paused for a moment, and looked upwards—a wild scream for "help!" burst upon his ear—a roar of curses and loud laughter followed. This last was the domestics in the gallery, who thus mocked what they took for the cries of the suffering Zingaro. A yet wilder and more piercing cry of agony again filled the air and again was it echoed by fresh yells of savage mockery.

"Ha!" exclaimed the listener, "these shrieks should have been mine, and such the laughter that would have greeted my agonies! Ha! ha! ha! roar on, ye accursed, let your shouts of joy ring in the ears of your unheeded burning lord: and may the fiends of Eblis redouble your cries, as his black soul is hurled amidst their eternal fires!"—Dashing the hot sweat from his scathed brow, the gipsy made for the olive grove, and with great difficulty held his way, until, exhausted, he sunk upon the welcome margin of the calm waters of *Gli Fonti d'Amore*.

CHAPTER IV.

On a gentle eminence, at the foot of the Vermero, stood the palace of the Conradini, in the midst of luxuriant vineyards, and immediately encircled by a private garden of some extent, beautifully laid out, and evincing a more careful superintendence than is usually bestowed in Italy upon such preserves. For in this favoured climate nature has showered so generally on every verdant spot her beauties of tree and flower, that the wealthy have little inducement to enclose for private luxury exotics which may be enjoyed by the meanest serf who cultivates his native fields.

To the palace of his ancestors the Conde Luigi had at once borne his youthful bride, for such he had legally made her. Fast as the church could bind them, they were now one; and although his father would not become a party to an unworthy bargain to obtain a daughter-in-law, he was not in his heart sorry to find that the happiness of his son was secured without such a compromise; and although Luigi's attempt would, had it been known to him, have been met by his fixed opposition, the die being fairly cast, he received his son with forgiveness, and his new-made daughter with a cordial welcome and a father's blessing. Letters were immediately dispatched to the Baron di Mirialva, to suggest to him the necessity of fulfilling the contract entered into by his deceased brother, or otherwise preparing to abide the king's judgment and probable displeasure; for to the foot of the throne, immediately upon a refusal, Conradini resolved to bear the claims of his son, and appeal to the justice of his sovereign. The messenger dispatched with the above demand had now been absent the full time necessary for his journey, and hourly expecting his arrival, the Conte Luigi and his bride sat beneath a veranda that commanded an ample view of the lovely bay. The moon was slowly rising in her fullest majesty, and had already silvered with her light the edges of the lofty cliffs, rising high over the picturesque Castel d'Ovo, which was itself lost in their deep shadows. The classic isles beyond just showed in the extreme distance like globes of silver floating on the dark bosom of the glassy sea. Not far removed might be heard the cries of the fishermen, as they hauled their boats above the reach of the waters, accompanied by the hoarse, low roar of the surf rolling in round the long continued line of beach. Nearer the palace, all was thrown into deep shadow by the stately silver pines, which, planted in thick rows, covered it in front like a noble guard, whilst many clumps of sweetly-scented shrubs were made to encroach to within a few paces of the window where sat the lovers. Constanza listened with a charmed ear to her lord as he pointed out the various beauties of the scene, with all the enthusiasm of a poet and with the love of a patriot for his native Naples.—"But the night-air is freshening, and you, love, must be wearied with my legends of the past glories of Naples, and of imperial Capri and its horrors. They are twice dear to me, for they are associated with my every childish joy and sorrow. They first stole on my wondering, eager ears in all the exaggerated detail of my good old nurse, and were in after days made the reward of well-doing, as on this very spot they were described in the grandeur of simple history, made still more noble by the glowing eloquence of my aged preceptor, the excellent Carlo Mattei.

Come, we will enter the apartment; see, the lamps are already lighted—come, and you shall shame my tediousness by playing one of those wild mountain airs we have so often sung together as we sauntered through your sweet valley of Salmona."—"Ah!" said Constanza, with a sigh, as the recollection of her own birth-place rose fresh upon her memory, "loved valley shall I ever again behold thee? ever again wander by those clear waters, where I have so often bounded on the light foot of childhood?"—"And in the young days of our love too," whispered Luigi. "Oh, fear not, dearest; your uncle will scarce dare abide the sovereign's command, which he knows must follow my father's appeal. He will yield to strong necessity, doubt not; and soon again shall you sit in the antique hall of your castello, and sing to me the country's gentle songs in praise of love's own poet and Salmona's pride." Together they now entered the apartment, throwing wide the casement, which opened to the ground. Constanza seated herself opposite to it, and in a tone of anxious melancholy, continued—

"I know not, my Luigi, what so oppresses me, but my heart is ever and anon seized with a throbbing which threatens even to burst it; my mind, too, has been all this day filled with dismal fancies."—"What can chill thee thus?" answered the conte, as he fondly pressed with his lips her marble brow. "Thou art happy, my own Constanza?" Beaming with tenderness, she fixed her gazelle-like eyes upon her lord, as she replied—"Happy! Luigi, am I not with thee? Am I not thine own Constanza? But would that this tardy courier were returned; you know not the fierce nature of Carlette di Mirialva. When I reflect on his hatred, on his daring, on his vengeance—oh! Luigi, can I speak it? but at this hour your life is perhaps only held at the will of the most profligate, the most reckless of men."—"Tush, tush! this is indeed wild dreaming. What! do you think Mirialva has no fear for himself? Too well he knows my father's vigour and our house's power, to tempt, by any evil wrought on me, his own assured destruction. I would I were but half as certain of the safety of my poor Zingaro ally; but he, I fear me, was allowed brief law. I would give, this very hour, the best horse, hound, and hawk I own, to save him from jeopardy—and that is higher pricing than was ever before put on him or on any of his kind."—"They are, indeed, a wayward, but also a sore-suffering race," replied Constanza; "but if ever I am again restored to the seat of my fathers, you, Luigi, must look to their better ordering, even for the sake of him who read my fortune by the springs of the Gli Fonti d'Amore."—"And died to have that fortune fairly sped," added the conte. "Even the lynx may be taught to love, and I will waste some kindness on that rude race, but I will mend their sad condition, even for his sake who helped me to the sweetest bride Salmona ever saw, or Ovid sung; that is, provided she belie her sex, and change not." A look of love and pride beamed from the eyes of Constanza, as, striking her lyre, she prettily echoed the word "change," and sang—

"For ever thine this heart—
Feel how it beats for thee,
And whilst it beats, this heart of mine
Will answer every throb of thine
With truest sympathy;
Thine, thine alone!

For ever thine this heart—
All else may change, and be;
But this, thy heart, no change can own,
For thee it beats, for thee alone,
And breaks, cast off by thee;
Thine, thine alone!"

The conte rose in delight from his lady's feet, where he had thrown himself to listen to her melody. The last tones of her sweet voice had not yet melted into the air, when a slight movement was heard at the window—the words, "Die, coward and fool!" were articulated in tones clear and piercing, though hardly uttered above a breath; one deep groan and a heavy fall followed—and all was silent as before. The conte started, and passed hastily to the window, close to which he at once observed the body of the fallen man. He stooped over the form—he pressed his hand upon the heart, but it beat no more—life had fled with the last sound. He was just opening his lips to call for aid, when a low hiss, issuing from the thick clump of shrubs close in his front, caused him to raise his head. What was his surprise when, full in the light of the moonbeam, with head uncovered, he beheld the well-remembered features of the Zingaro!

"Ha!" exclaimed the conte, "thou alive and here? How means all this? Speak!"—"Pianissimo, signor mio," whispered the gipsy; "it is ill speaking too loud of a death done, where one's confession may be overheard by more than the priest. But fear nothing now: first assure thy lady's silence; for, if you remember, my face was not altogether after her liking when she last saw it, and I promise you it is not much improved in comeliness since; a cry *from her lips now might* peril me to the fall as much as it did before, and by my life I have

no mind for another such adventure." The Conte Luigi turned into the chamber where Constanza sat as if spell-bound: she had heard the groan, had seen her husband's movement towards the sound, but at that moment her over-excited nerves failed beneath the shock, and she remained without the power of speech or motion. "Be no longer alarmed, dearest Constanza," murmured the conte, trying to reassure his gentle wife; "'tis nothing—only a faithful varlet, who is now without, and whose appearance hitherto has ever been to us a harbinger of joy. Come, cheer thee, to hear the marvel of his coming; perchance thy uncle has relented, and so released this trusty knave as a true pledge of his wish to conciliate."—"Trust not, oh! trust not to the baron," exclaimed Constanza wildly, drawing the conte nearer to her, "for there is danger, my husband, and the presence of the Zingaro speaks it. That fearful groan, too. Oh! said I not my soul foreboded evil? Luigi, rely not too firmly on the faith of this strange being; many and fearful are the tales told of his people's treachery, and few and bold are they who place deep trust in them."—"Nay, be not unmindful of his true service, love. Remember I owe to it all my present joys, and even those joys I'd freely pledge upon his faith. Be not alarmed, and he shall himself speak out his errand." Luigi beckoned the Zingaro to advance: with a glance of bitter scorn he planted his foot upon the corse stretched in his way, and at once stepped into the apartment. Constanza shrunk within herself, as doubtingly she gazed upon his features. He was, in truth, much changed; his face and neck were in many places disfigured by blotches of deep red; these contrasted but ill with its natural hue. His once luxuriant hair, too, was almost gone; in some places it was shorn quite close to the blackened scalp, whilst here and there a stray lock remained, no longer flowing gracefully as before, but shrivelled and bristling from his head. His eye alone retained its native lustre, and bespoke that, though all without was altered, the ardent soul within still remained unchanged. Bending low to the lady, he calmly stood as if waiting question.

"When," demanded the conte, "didst thou leave the Castel di Mirialva?"—"On the eve of your past Sabbath."—"By good leave, or——?"—"Even by the way you entered it—the window; no bad way either, when a man needs more haste than help."—"How! You escaped from durance, then, and without the baron's knowledge?"—"Not so, either, signor; the baron learnt, though somewhat at the latest, I was about to quit his hospitable keeping." "Thou speakest somewhat in riddles, Zingaro. I have a courier dispatched to the baron—knowest thou his present humour? how will my servant find him?"—"He may not well find him, conte, without first quitting your service."—"How so?"—"Because he whom he seeks no longer lives."—"Ha!"—Constanza sprung from the couch—"my uncle dead."—"Start not, lady," coolly replied the Zingaro, "and speak not over loud, for I stay not your questioning on roses. In brief, you are now, thanks to my fortune, once more in safety; may return to your fair domain, and live free and fearless, for your worst enemy is no more; he has died the death that best may fit him for the after-life. He was burnt—burnt within that very house he withheld from his brother's child; he was swept from life planning the misery of her to whom he should have proved a sworn protector."—"Merciful God, assoil his soul!" fervently prayed Constanza.—"The fire was accidental?" demanded the conte, closely regarding the man as he spoke. He smiled grimly as, lowering his voice, he answered with fearful earnestness—"The flames were lighted by me, to aid my escape from bondage and from certain death. What! did the slaves think to keep the falcon and not hood his eyes? Did they leave to the Zingaro one glimpse of the clear light of heaven, and look to have him yield without a struggle the life that made light dear? Scourged like a hound till my very bones lay bared to their lewd mockery, I was bound and thrown aside to wait till their pleasure served to hang me. Was I to bide their coming? No; I fired the detested den that held me, and broke once more to freedom from its blazing ruins as they crumbled round me. Thus at liberty, I had, perchance, contented me with my escape, but the ill spirit of the baron threw him in that wild moment across my way. Smarting from the fire I scarce had hoped to live through, I saw my pain, my hopes, made by his presence in an instant void, and fresh tortures again awaiting me. One instant effort promised both safety and revenge. I boldly, madly made the venture. Behold I am safe—I am revenged. Even now his shriek from that smouldering chamber of death sounds again in my ear, and more than answers all my sufferings. He is no more; and, you Conte Luigi, are now free to live. Return to your castello, lady; 'tis little the worse for the airing I have given it. I read you a *fair fortune*, and you have found it; may it ever bide with you. Signor, I owed you a life; I *feel* quitted. for I have saved you this night from as sudden an ending of

awaited me that day when the hunter's belt was drawn round my throat in the forest of Venafro."—"How! my life—mean you that?"—"Look on this carrion," continued the Zingaro, as he turned over the body of the slain man with his foot; "stoop down, and know that evil face."—It was the countenance of Jocope, for many years the porter of the Castel di Mirialva. "What!" said Luigi, "would this man have struck the husband of his old master's child?" "He!" interrupted the Zingaro, "he would have struck the husband of the mother that bore him, for half the price set upon your head. On my escape I sought out this traitor, and caught him grovelling on a wrong scent. Unseen and unsuspected, I soon found means to set him right; once well laid on the track, I knew he'd stick to it."—"What!" cried Constanza, shuddering, "you guided him the way to murder?"—"Truly, lady, I left him not unguided; for from that hour I slept where he slept, and when he rose I rose; I breathed as he breathed, moved as he moved; we had but one shadow in the sun—but he dreamed not of this: full surely I guided him, even to his purpose and to his end. He was blinded to my wish by the promised gold; it ever glittered before his eyes, and he saw no other object. But it is passed, and behold where he lies! Mark, signor, his hand is on the lock of the petronel, whose report was to have pronounced you a corse, and him master of a thousand ducats. I watched his serpent-crawl to this very spot; I saw the felon-sparkle of his eyes, I heard the short panting of his bated breath, and marked his deadly aim; but me he saw not, heard not, till he felt my blow."—"Heavens!" cried Constanza, "an instant later and the murder had been done."—The Zingaro smiled. "No, lady, think not I rested upon less than surety—his trusty petronel a truer friend of mine had rendered harmless. Blindly he incurred the penalty without the chance of murder."—"Strange being," inquired the conte, "why not have informed me of my danger, and left his punishment to justice?"—"What! would justice better have revenged my stripes than my own right hand has done? That one blow struck, I am again a man, and the mark of the lash will be no longer my shame. From my mother's breast until the dark hour but one hand ever inflicted disgrace on my free body—this hand it was." He let the lifeless limb which he had grasped fall upon the path, and contemptuously gazed upon it.

"But why," said the conte, "when you knew his purpose, why let him proceed so near to the fulfilment of his bloody errand?"—"Ha, ha! Conte Luigi, think you his mere death could appease my vengeance? No! I smote him; and without one prayer for mercy, his soul is gone to its eternal account. Like his gratitude is also the vengeance of lo Zingaro—*senza limito*. But hark! I hear approaching footsteps." He now gave a long, sharp hiss—a young female was in an instant by his side. "Zea," he said, "there stands the man for whom you have laboured; the only man who ever saved or spared any of our race. Thank him quickly, and let us begone to the mountain." The girl advanced to the conte, and taking his hand, she pressed it with reverence to her forehead, whilst her eloquent look spoke volumes of thanksgiving. "Allow me a few minutes' law ere you have this foul carcase stirred," said the Zingaro, "for I would ill like further questioning. Nay, shudder not, lady," he added; "think upon my wild nature, and my cruel suffering. Farewell." The Zingaro and the maiden together disappeared as the attendant announced to the conte the return of his belated courier. First requesting his father's presence, Luigi admitted the man, and from his lips heard the story of the Zingaro confirmed. He told how he had witnessed the removal of the blackened remains of the baron from the ruins of the still reeking chamber. The fire, he said, had been promptly got under, and indeed extended little beyond the immediate suite of apartments where it first broke out. He told, too, strange stories of the Zingaro—of his having spirited the poor baron to change places with him, through the devil's aid, whom some of the attendants swore they saw personally engaged in feeding the flames, and at last take to flight through the broken casement, bearing the Zingaro on his huge wing, and leaving the spell-bound baron to abide the fiery penalty. On the man's being dismissed to entertain his awe-stricken fellows with these marvels, the conte imparted to his father the true, but strange story of his preservation. The proper authorities were promptly assembled, and the necessary forms gone through; but as every evidence went to prove the purpose of the dead emissary of Mirialva, the conte was at once honourably installed, by the royal consent, in all the honours and wide domains of his fair runaway. Large rewards were offered for the apprehension of the incendiary, and orders issued to clear the Abruzzo of the outlaw Zingari with fire and sword; but as the execution of these orders rested with the new *baron, they were very* differently interpreted.

CHAPTER V.

A TWELVEMONTH had passed away, and many mingled sounds of song and dance, and the light laugh of unrestrained glee echoed round the old towers of the Castel di Mirialva; gay banners fluttered in the mountain breeze from the lofty battlements, and the hill-side swarmed with merry groups of peasants, who were eagerly watching the approach of a distant cavalcade, impatiently waiting to hail the first-born of their liege lady, the heir of the Conradini. It was the anniversary of the festival of the Annunziata, and chosen by Constanza for the day that was to give to the mother church one other member in her new-born son. "I choose this day," said Constanza to her lord, "for it was on this day I met the mendicant palmer in the church of the Annunziata; but, though I love right well the gentle name of Luigi, yet shall this boy be called Ovidio, in remembrance of the spot where I stayed to list my fair fortune." The lady had her will, and it was her return from the convent the assembled vassals so eagerly abided. As the gay cortège approached the foot of the hill, Constanza turned her palfrey from the side of her infant's litter, and calling to her lord to follow, gaily galloped over the yielding sward towards Gli Fonti d'Amore. Together they reined up upon its margin; Constanza fondly pressed the hand of Luigi, and pointing to the rich olives whose branches swept the waters, she told how upon that spot her startled eye first rested on the dark form of the Zingaro. She waved her hand to hasten some of the approaching guests, when a female advanced from the thick shade of the trees, and laying her finger impressively on her lip, motioned the conte to be gone, glancing at the same time upwards amid the branches. Following the direction of her look, the conte caught a sight of the dark visage of the Zingaro, with finger on lip, just visible for an instant through the thick foliage. On this, whispering his discovery to Constanza, they quickly turned together and stayed the advance of their gentle followers. Loud shouts from the hill at the same moment bespoke the reception of Mirialva's future lord amidst his happy vassals. "Let us hasten to thank the honest knaves," said the conte, and in a moment quickly bounded each steed towards the castello. The day was devoted to sumptuous festivity. At length the sounds of revelry were hushed; the banqueters, wearied with the fulness of their joys, were buried in profound repose. In the silence of their chamber the conte and his fair wife at length left alone, marvelled on their strange vision of that morning; for from the time he bade them farewell in the palace of the Conradini, no word of the eagerly-sought Zingaro had reached their ears. The fond mother bent above the couch of her sleeping boy, and loudly prayed all evil might be averted from his innocent head, when—"hark!"—the soft notes of music rose through the air. Imagining it to be a gallant device of their guests, or some rustic serenade, the conte and lady left their chamber and advanced to that very window whence, twelve months before, they had so fearfully descended. The night was close and calm, and the casement stood open to court the lazy air. Looking out to greet the serenaders, they recognized at once, standing in the shade below, the figures of the Zingaro and the dark young maiden. She was seated on the rude bench at the foot of the tower; before her lay a huge hound of the mountain breed, and by her side stood her companion, his rude guitar in his hand. The conte was about to address them, but motioning for silence, the Zingaro spoke in a low tone to the girl—"Sing, Zea, sing to them the song of joy, made more welcome from thy lips; sing to them the song of our last parting." He pointed impressively towards the distant horizon's edge, and then softly swept the strings of his guitar, whilst, raising her dark eyes to Constanza, the maiden obeyed, and sang the

PROPHECY.

"Ladye, look from thy bower on high,
Look on yonder western sky,
Look o'er tree, o'er tower, and fountain,
Where the silver cloud sits on the mountain.
Look, ladye, look, and mark the star,
Beaming so lightly from afar;
That star is a herald bearing joy
To thee and thy sleeping cherub boy.

I mark'd the day, I watch'd the hour,
I've read its errand, know its power;
It bears to that boy who cradled lies,
All of good beneath the skies.
Success in love, in peace, in war,
High fame, and honour, brings yon star;
Happy mother, now rest thee well,
His fortune's read! Farewell—farewell!"

Never again did the wild form of lo Zingaro cross the path of the Conradini, nor ever after this hour did the plaintive melody of his guitar awake the night.

THE END.

THE

DEER-STALKERS OF GLENSKIACH.

A HIGHLAND LEGEND.

BY

ANDREW PICKEN.

"The red roe bounds swift through the wilds of Braemar;
The war-cry sounds sharp from the crags of Glenshee:
But where nature blooms sweetest, the heart may break soonest,
And Love's tales are aye saddest in vales like Strathdee."—SCRAPS.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY J. CLEMENTS, LITTLE PULTENEY STREET,

FOR THE PROPRIETORS OF

THE ROMANCIST AND NOVELIST'S LIBRARY.

1840.

THE

DEER-STALKERS OF GLENSKIACH.

CHAPTER I.

"The red roe bounds swift through the wilds of Braemar;
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About the middle of the seventeenth century, before civil improvement had penetrated into the fastnesses of the north, the Highlands of Scotland were in all respects in that wild state, from which constantly arose circumstances and incidents that are at least very different from the common routine of modern life. Feudal clanship was still in its vigour. To the lawless tribes of the Scottish mountains and forests, life was a mixture of romance and barbarism, of enthusiastic devotion to their adored chiefs, and of liberty as perfect as that of the noble savage himself, who roams the wilds at will, and gratifies his love or his vengeance by his own dexterity, or the strength of his arm.

And yet, as is well known, Highlanders have to this day a tinge of melancholy in their characters. Nature is often grand and impressive around them; but the impression, though deep, and poetical from its wildness, is generally cheerless in its solemnity, and bleak and rugged in its very grandeur. The inconstant sky of these foggy regions adds often a darker gloom to the effect of the bold scenery of their mountains, and to the impressive stillness of their sweeping flats of red heath; but when the sun *does* shine with summer clearness upon their romantic hills, and opens out the mysteries of their green glens; when his cheering beams become reflected from their glorious lochs and their still waters in the hollows, the heart of the roving Highlander leaps with joy, and he thinks his own country the most charming on earth.

Much of the Scottish scenery, beneath its mountains, consists, even to this day, of a picturesque mixture of scattered woodlands, rocky hills, and green glades, which still bear the general name of forests, although considerably changed since the times of which we write, by being denuded of the national fir or pine-trees, of which these woods were chiefly composed. The forests of Athol and of Glenmore, of Abernethy and Braemar, have long been celebrated as the great fastnesses of the Highlands, where, in times of public strife, domestic feud, or unsuccessful rebellion, the hardy Celts of the hill could set at defiance all search as well as all regular warlike attack. It is with the last of these, namely, the ancient forest of Braemar, that our simple tale has chiefly to do.

The great Mar-forest, now maintaining little of its former character, situated in the middle of Aberdeenshire, and extending some forty miles along the banks of the Scottish Dee, is sufficiently diversified in its interior scenery and surface, to afford excellent shelter and concealment for all who chose to lead a lawless life within its bosom, or whom crime or misfortune had driven from their homes, and from circumstances more akin to comfort and civilization. At the time we speak of, it belonged to John, the eighth Earl of Mar,*

* For several of the particulars on which this tale is founded the author is indebted to the talented Ettrick Shepherd, the indefatigable collector of Scottish traditions, and a worthy coadjutor of our club.

and, like other Scottish forests in the neighbourhood, was well stocked with game of various sorts, now comparatively scarce in the Highlands; particularly with the well known red deer of the north, that, browsing on the sweet herbage of its dells and coires, bounded in multitudes amongst its ancient oaks, its dark Scots firs, and its tangled brushwood. The hunting of the deer, the dun wolf, the badger and the boar, was, from the remotest period, as is well known, a favourite diversion of the Highland chieftains, and indeed of all Scotsmen, from the king downwards.

But poaching being an ancient amusement as well as legitimate hunting, it was not to be supposed that the fat bucks who ran wild in these woods should not prove a great temptation to ruined lairds and other inferior gentlemen, who never had much to boast of save their ancient lineage, and to sundry other hungry Highlanders, who, from various causes, were driven into a sort of exile, in the heart of their own country. Accordingly, in these days there were not wanting numbers of brave fellows who loved the free air of the forest, and delighted exceedingly in game and venison; and who, possessing a quick eye, and a strong arm for drawing a bow, contrived to live at free quarters in the woods of Braemar and Athol, chiefly upon the savoury food which they hunted by day, or such other God-sends as their reiver skill and their good claymores might procure them by night.

Although this forest had, from time immemorial, afforded an asylum and support to certain marauders, black-mail men, and deer-stalkers, and although it was the owner's conviction that, to his own foresters, such gentry would always form part of the game to be hunted in his woods, yet some accounts that he had heard concerning their number and audacity, about the time our story commences, induced him to give especial heed to the subject, and try to prevent his good red deer from being more common to the use of others than to himself or his people. At this time there lived with him in the castle of Braemar, a youth, named Alaster Graham, or, as he was frequently called, Alaster the Sassenach, from his having been brought up in the Lowlands, and to him the earl determined to intrust the care of checking the constant incursions on his interesting live-stock in the woods.

This youth had already made himself remarkable for uncommon strength, as well as for the perfect fearlessness with which he undertook enterprises and performed feats, which even to the hardy Highlanders of these glens seemed quite wonderful. Taller than common, the person of Alaster was yet exceedingly well formed, and built with athletic firmness, and his superiority in the usual martial exercise of the time soon procured him a high place in the respect of the other retainers of the earl. Being often employed, not only in deer-hunting with his patron or kinsman, but in making inroads upon the reivers that burrowed in the heart of the wood, he had established a sort of out-post in a cave which was very peculiarly situated, and was accessible only by a single and secret pass, from which he gave the deer-stalkers great and constant annoyance.

It soon came to be understood that some relationship subsisted between Alaster and the earl, but what that relationship precisely was never was certainly known. Some said he was his illegitimate son, the consequence of a youthful amour with a fair cousin of the present countess, who bore the name of Graham; others said no; but so it was, that the earl had a great favour for him, and appointed him a sort of ranger of his immense forests. Nothing could be more to the taste of Alaster than this office; for hunting the fox, or pursuing the red deer, were both his delight; and the very squabbles and contentions with the poaching marauders who infested the wood, contributed to the romantic excitement of his employment, and afforded many opportunities for exhibiting that personal prowess for which he had become famous far and near.

In those days, however, personal strength and undaunted courage were no rarity anywhere, least of all were they scarce among the wild freebooters of the Scottish forests; and there was in particular an excluded covey of the Gordons that had established itself within the recesses of the great wood of Braemar, which consisted of men as remarkable for their desperate courage and strength as for the lawless life they were accustomed to lead. Among these, their chieftain, Grumach Gordon, though now beyond middle age, was a man well fitted to lead a band of broken men who were often engaged in fierce encounters with similar marauders, and whose broad claymores seldom were suffered long to remain inactive on the thighs of the wearers.

It so happened that Alaster Graham had never for a long period been able to fall in with any

number of these Gordons, nor would he believe either in the plenty in which they were reported to live, nor the strength and courage which he had often heard most provokingly attributed to old Grumach their chief, or the bold and brave John of Leask, his rough and undauntable kinsman. One day, however, strolling on foot-deep into the recesses of the forest, accompanied only by his man Farquhar, Alaster came unexpectedly upon the indications of human habitations. Pursuing their track, the wanderers soon perceived a pleasant opening, beyond which, at the head of the glen, was ranged a snug congregation of habitations which made a sort of baille, or hamlet in the wood; and from the wattled chimneys of which rose, at the moment, such volumes of smoke as showed pretty clearly that the people within neither wanted warmth nor food. A savoury scent of the well known venison came temptingly over the senses of the hungry travellers, as, late in the day, they came upon this woodland den of the Gordons, and Alaster soon found that he had more than one appetite to gratify, before he was likely to leave this comfortable spot.

"Where are you going, maister, and what are you behoving to do?" said Farquhar, his gilly or servant, "surely ye're not gaun into the vera tod's hole, wi' your een wide open?"

"Would you have me to shirk like a Lowlander, from a gang of deerstealers," said Alaster, "while I have a claymore on my hip? Poogh, Farquhar! If you're fear'd, man, go back to the old rock aboon the burn, or to the chimney cheek o' the Mar Castle; but as for me, since I've come so far, faith I'll have a tussle wi' the greedy Gordons o' the wood—Humph! what a fine smell of venison!—devil do them good o't!"

"Lord-sake, maister, dinna gang straight into the lion's den," replied the gilly, holding the other by the plaid; "if ye do, ye'll ne'er get another sight o' the tappy turrets o' the auld Castles of Kildrummy, or Braemar, an' I'll never get another wainfu' o' steev brochan at the laird's ha'—haud back, maister!—there's life an' death on't."

"I'll just see first what's inside of that braw bigging that reeks like a killogie," said the bold young forest-ranger, striding forward. In another instant he had opened the low door of the rude building, and the two found themselves at once in a warm and roomy apartment.

"*Kimerhashen*—there's fouth and routh here," said Alaster, as he drew himself up to his length on getting within the dwelling, and looking up saw the ceiling of the house thickly hung with red-deer hams, while the smell of the savoury mess, which was cooking in a large pot that hung over the fire, had a particular temptation in it. Nor less so was the sight of a quantity of dried malt at the farther end of the house, which was in preparation for brewing, and mayhap for distilling, the peculiar beverage of the hardy Highlanders. A good-looking woman stood by the fire, paying due attention to the potful of venison stew, which sent forth so pleasing an odour through the sheiling, and three or four bare-boughed Highlanders lounged near the fire, or scoured their weapons at the farther window. They all seemed startled by the entrance of the strangers, but the men only looked darkly at each other without offering any other than a very slight civility, while the good woman, dropping her ladle and a Highland curtesy at the same time, politely offered Alaster Graham a three-legged stool on which to rest himself, until she might learn the errand which had brought so buirdly a young fellow to the dwelling.

A mutual glance between the men and our hero showed him in an instant that some of them knew him, and declining the low seat offered by the cailach, he determined, by some brief observation, at once to decide the nature of his reception. Casting his eye upwards again at the tiers of brown hams above him, the sight of which galled both his pride of place, and reproached his vigilance, he said, with a mixture of defiance and sarcasm,—"By my faith, lads, ye know where the Earl of Mar's deer bounds, and can bring down a buck with arrow and bow, without giving yourself the trouble to inquire to whom it belongs. 'Tis well you can fare thus in the wood."

"Hoigh! the fare's weel enough," said one of the men, saucily; "but the horned beasts that brattle through the forest dinna run in at the idle man's door, an' the black moor-cock that whirrs o'er the brake dinna flee into the kail-pat of its own accord. But to whatever fare we hae in the wilds o' Mar, the stranger is welcome that comes as a friend."

"As to friend or foe," answered Graham, with fearless rashness, "that must depend on the account you can give of how or where the venison has been obtained, which makes this woodland hovel a store of greater plenty than the braid kitchen of the Earl of Mar's castle. I eat

not stolen meat, nor do I even bend my boughs to sit in the company of katerin knaves, Whence came all this venison?"

"Oigh, oigh, Mr Sassenach!" answered the Highlander, coolly; "whenever ye can tell a stag's horn frae a steer's stump, an' a Highland shentleman wi' a claymore to keep off the braggarts, frae the laird's loon that disna ken how to speak civility when he goes a roving through the woods among better men, I'll answer the query—but not till then."

The brawny Gael had scarcely got these words out of his mouth, when Alaster, regardless of all consequences, took two strides up to the speaker, and seizing him by the throat, commanded him in a tone of authority which struck the others with astonishment, instantly to inform him explicitly how he had obtained the store of venison that he saw around him.

The Highlander, who was no other than the John Gordon, usually called John of Leask, of whom our bold youth had often heard, not doubting that the imperious intruder had a strong party without, who waited to second the quarrel that he seemed to be raising, thought fit for the present to lower his tone, and civilly informing the stranger that he was not the master there, assured him that the inquiry would soon be answered to his satisfaction.

The house in which Alaster and these persons now were, was a large barn-shaped building, which served for a sort of hall or place of public meeting and entertainment for the marauders of the forest, as well as a general store-house for their provision, and a distillery for the manufacture of the aqua, with which they occasionally regaled themselves in no very stinted measure. While the foregoing altercation was proceeding, one of the men had stepped out under cover of the smoke of the large fire which burned near the farther end, to apprize their leader, Grumach Gordon, of what was going forward. Hastily buckling on his broad-sword, the veteran chief rushed into the barn or rural hall of his people, and was absolutely petrified with astonishment on perceiving a single youth of little more than nineteen, with a strong grasp collaring his kinsman, while the hardy John of Leask seemed to quail before him.

"Gad a mercy! what's this? a pig man—that's but a gilly—thrappling at the throat of John of Leask! Aff hands! Got tamn! A young whelp frae the dugs will think to worry an old stag!"

"Tell me, if you are master, who kidnapped the red deer whose boughs and hams are ranged in scores over our heads?" demanded Alaster, throwing the man he had held by the collar from him.

"Phugh-ooh! is that it?" said old Gordon, disdainfully. "I'll tell you what it is, young man, I've shot a deer before the priest made the holy cross on your brazen brow, when ye were a squalling brat an' a plague to your minnie; an' I'll eat the wholesome venison of the forest when ye are supping sour crowdy at the far end of some puir laird's table: so dinna come here to speer saucy questions at the clan of the Gordons; for better men than you hae gotten an answer in cauld steel, that made a sad hole in their stomachs. Therefore just take an auld man's hint, an' dinna put your finger into the tod's mouth when he's angry!"

"Do you refuse to give any explanation to me, sir?" cried Alaster, "who demand it in the name of the Earl of Mar himself, the noble owner of this forest, in which you have taken up your residence unbidden, and without paying kane or coin for the favourable shelter of these boughs and beilds? Do you refuse to answer where you obtain this store of venison? or to promise to quit with your followers this wood? Answer me!"

"Go to a paper court at Dun-eiden * and seek for answers to such questions," said the old marauder, doggedly; "but don't think to come into a Highland forest and speer the catechism at honest deer-stalkers wi' swords by their sides. And as for the Earl of Mar, if he grudges a red buck now and then to Highland shentlemen, living civilly in the wood, tell him from me that Grumach Gordon and his men will neither answer buff nor sty to his backspeerings, an that I care not a doit for him or his beardless messengers."

"Who are you, old fellow?" said Alaster, scarcely able to refrain from springing like a tiger on the reiver chief, "that dares to speak thus to the noble Earl of Mar, and to me his relative and representative. By the hilt of this sword, that is ready to leap out of its scabbard, you and your thievish clan shall pay for this day's insult!"

"For God's sake, master—have a care what you say," whispered Farquhar, his trusty

* Edinburgh.

gilly, in the youth's ear. "Remember we are only two, and see how these wild Gordons crowd around and grin defiance upon us, perceiving that we are entirely in their power."

"I demand again a civil message and a repentant promise to the Earl of Mar, before I stir from this spot," vociferated Alaster, with the recklessness of an undaunted spirit, and paying no attention to the prudent warning of his servant.

"Kill the saucy Sassenach!" shouted several voices, for the whole company of the Gordons had by this time crowded into the house, and already stood eager for a fray.

"By the soul of my father, you are not likely to stir far from the spot, young man, if you beard us thus!" cried the old chieftain, drawing his broad sword—"and as for the Earl of Mar, your kinsman, or your master, I am a shentleman born, sir, as well as you or he, an' Grumach Gordon has as cood plood in his veins as either of you — an' I defy you and the earl and all your clan! since you provoke me;— for the Gordons o' the Mar-wood will never run like wild does frae the Sassenachs o' the vallies — now hear ye that, young man?"

"Then, since you've sworn," said Alaster, stepping forward fiercely, "I swear too, by the black crag of Glen-dearg that bounds this forest, that whenever we next meet beyond the stones of Sharnock, where the deer browses on the slopes of Cairntoul, the whizzing bullet from the long guns of my clan, or the broad arrow that never misses its aim, shall drink the blood of the wild thieves of the wood — hear ye that, old man?"

"Ye shall never see that day, nor the morn's light, since ye will beard the fox in his ain den," said Grumach Gordon, gnashing his teeth with rage, as he clenched his sword, and in two minutes after the two adversaries, followed by the crowd of the threatening Gordons, were without on the sod, and preparing for the combat. It was in vain that the cool and experienced Farquhar attempted to dissuade his master from fighting such a cock as Grumach upon his own dunghill, by the reasonable representation, that if he even slew the stalker chief, both their lives should pay for it in an instant after, by the fury of his enraged men, who now, as well as the women of the hamlet, crowded round to witness the strife. Meantime, when the wives and daughters of the forest-reivers observed the tall figure and fine form of so mere a youth as Alaster was, as he stood up to fight their chief, some apprehension was entertained for their own leader, and not a little anxiety was in the minds of some, lest the uncertain fortune of bloody strife should cause so fine a fellow perhaps to be carried out of the forest a mangled corpse.

But the fury of the chieftain could now suffer no restraint, and the courage of Alaster would suffer as little question, so, to it they went, while the shouts and yells of the anxious Gordons in encouragement of their champion, made the scene almost hideous, particularly to poor Farquhar, who stood by, holding his master's plaid, and his long fusee, with a look of dogged despair; foreseeing, with melancholy conviction, that whatever way the combat should end, this was the last day that either was likely to have to live.

A very few moments served to decide the combat. Alaster evidently kept on the defensive, while the older man, trusting more to strength than swordmanship, and being too much enraged to fight warily, was soon spent: so that with an ease, a self-command, and a degree of strength that was imputed by the superstitious spectators to nothing else than witchcraft, the young man, first wounding and then disarming his adversary, laid the proud reiver chieftain sprawling at his feet.

The enraged men who had been spectators, now, as Farquhar had foreseen, rushed in upon Alaster; and John of Leask getting behind him, first threw a long plaid round his body, and then, with the assistance of others, bound him with cords, and parting him from his reluctant gilly, who in vain attempted resistance, they dragged the youth thus strongly bound into a small hovel, and throwing him down upon a heap of fern, left him with an emphatic intimation that he had not long to live, but that Grumach Gordon was the man who should pronounce his doom.

CHAPTER II.

In a low and narrow outhouse, but built, or rather inclosed, partly in the recumbent rock in an angle of the glen, lay Alaster Graham, bound as he was, and rested for a time in perfect tranquillity of mind; for, as for death, come when it might, he thought little of it,—and, in short; such was his nature that any sort of fear regarding himself was a sensation to which he was

perfectly a stranger. The tightened cords, however, that bound his arms and limbs began to render him exceedingly uneasy, and die or live, another sensation added to his pain, which was no other than the common gnawing of hunger, but which in a healthy youth, who had eaten nothing since grey morning, now began to be extremely intense and troublesome.

"They cannot mean to leave me here to perish by starvation!" murmured the poor fellow to himself as he lay and swallowed down the water that rushed into his mouth, as the savoury smell of game and venison was occasionally wafted across his sense by the wind that whistled through the crevices of the hovel.

"Shall I call aloud for food?" he continued, as he listened to the tread of the sentinel placed over him, who paced slowly backwards and forwards without. "No," he added bitterly — and making a strong effort to ease his arms, "though I now see clearly their meaning; but I shall die first, after my heart has been eaten out of my breast with the pinching of gaunt starvation. Oh! if I were only free of these cursed bonds, the mother that bore me should never have to lament that her bold son, who so imprudently trusted himself among these wild Ishmaelites, should die like a dog for want of a morsel of meat."

Night now began to darken down, and still the unfortunate youth heard nothing but the measured step of his Celtic sentinel, the faint hum of distant voices in the baille, and the low whistling of the mountain wind, which came in irregular breezes through the surrounding openings of the forest. Hunger and exhaustion are provocatives to sleep, and imaginative melancholy brings on fantastic visions of indefinite troubles. But dreary woods and haggard phantoms in the shape of strange forest-spirits, their heads adorned with the antlers of the deer, —which first seemed to crowd around him with threatening aspect,—at length gave way, in the changes of his dream, to beauteous nymphs with soft voices and yellow hair streaming in the breeze—next a table covered with linen, whiter than the snow on Ben-lawers, seemed to spread out under the tangled branches of the wood, and smoking dishes of savoury venison, offered by smiling maidens, presented a banquet that a king might envy. Still he seemed to struggle in vain to get free of his bonds, that he might partake thereof. Anon he thought he felt the cords and thongs gently unswathing from around him, and the bands of sleep or of his pleasing dream gradually were removed from his excited imagination; until feeling sensibly soft fingers touching his cramped arms, he opened his eyelids, and perceived a female form bending over him, her long locks of yellow hair touching his neck, and her warm breath almost moistening his cheek, as with gentle earnestness she busied herself unravelling the cords which bound him so closely.

For a moment he could not recollect where he was; but the spitting light from a small rush lamp, that had been placed on one of the projecting stones which composed the rugged walls of the hovel, showed him its shape and brought his situation to his memory, while his sense was saluted by the tempting odour of a dish of game that also smoked near him, and the form of the female imperfectly seen, by the dim light of the cruisy, showed him the angel hand, which his dream had represented as providing a banquet for him in this wilderness—and which was awaking him from his deep sleep, by giving him freedom from his bonds. The female shrunk modestly from Alaster when she saw him open his eyes, and retiring, and then fetching forward the mess of venison, she looked kindly in his face as he sat up, and in a low voice, and in soft liquid Gælic, bade him eat and be silent.

It was not until the hungry youth had swallowed a few mouthfuls of that food, which to one in his circumstances was more valuable than pearls, that his ardent appetite allowed him time to look that gratitude in the face of the Highland maiden, which he had neither words nor leisure to express. The girl smiled archly as she observed his healthy youthful voracity, but she seemed to watch, with the keen ear of a greyhound, for any sound that might give indication of interruption to her hazardous enterprize.

"Who are you, bonnie lass, that I dreamed of in my sleep, and that comes to me in the wood, and in the dark night with viands, more grateful than handfuls of gold; and with looks almost as sweet, to the sad and the foredoomed, as the kisses that seem to hang so temptingly on thy lips? Speak again," added the youth as he paused in his repast, "that I may know that my dream is indeed gone, and that through thy means I am again awake to life and to liberty."

"Eat your meat, kind sir, and drink your drink," was the polite speech of the Highland maiden, as she brought forth a goodly caup filled with the forest liquor—"and then I wil

speak all that I dare, and more mayhap — hush! this beverage has strength in it, and you may need it. Now, cut these other thongs that bind your limbs, and I will take nothing for your freedom and your life, which I have come to save at the hazard of my own, but your word, your simple promise, and the token of your troth, that you will spare, as you can, the deer-hunters of the forest — and above all, that you will protect, instead of seeking the life of my passionate father, Grumach Gordon."

"And is it really so, pretty maiden?" said Alaster, gazing upon her with astonishment and admiration; for warlike exercises and woodland sports had hitherto so absorbed his attention that he had scarcely ever till now looked fairly upon the face of a woman. "It is a hard condition thou imposest upon me, and freedom itself should not purchase my consent to it, but that thou art interested, sweet girl, — but I will keep it for thy sake — here is my token; but what is thy name, maiden, that I may know thee, as the prettiest wood-nymph that haunts the forest of Mar?"

"My name is Moina, sir, — alas! what a fate was to have been yours this night, but I saw how well you fought to-day, though it was with my own father; I saw you a stranger in the midst of the wild exiles of the forest, and I determined to save you — hist!—no, 'tis no one— now, are you ready?"

"I am," said Alaster, springing up, "but what fate was to have been mine? Tell me, sweet Moina, from what you have saved me."

"From death in the dark, without the brave man's recompense, and from a deep grave in the covert of the wood, where the warrior never plants his firm foot, nor sheds his tear for the fallen. There is a small party of the clan of Macrabin, that lurks among the rocks near the edge of the glen, — they have been sent for, sir, and are to come here in the dead of the night intending to be thy secret executioners."

"And where, for heaven's sake, is my glaiked gilly, Farquhar?"

Moina only shook her head with a look of sad meaning — and then said earnestly, "Haste, haste! — the lamp burns low, and the time wears apace — and if you do not get round the hill before the night-wind rises, these blood-hounds will scent you out. But you will mind your promise, Alaster? alas! and yet you are rashness itself."

"Fear not, my sweet Moina, there is my token," he said, taking from the goat-skin purse or sporan, which hung before him, a small pocket-piece; "it is old gold, and it is thin worn— but you are my deliverer — my guardian angel of the wood; shall we break the coin between us as lovers do?"

"I shall not say nay to your offered troth, brave youth," she answered modestly, but looking up anxiously in his face; and they broke the piece of gold between them — "it is at least," she added, "for my father's sake."

"This must be for mine then, Moina," he said, throwing one arm in customary gallantry round her neck, and stooping his face close to that of the Highland maiden — "nay, be not unreasonably coy at such a moment as this;" she trembled in his ardent grasp. "God bless thee, my deliverer! thy lips are sweeter than the blaeberries of the bank, and warmer than —"

"Hush! — now, set forth by this opening; be sure you keep the hill on your left, and your eye on the north star, when you can see it through among the trees, until you get to the great stone of Glen-durig, and then you will know your own way. Blessings on you, youth! and safety."

She watched the tall figure of Alaster, as he moved down the path betwixt her and the starry sky; then passing softly the Highland sentinel, who was still sound asleep by the hovel, from the drink she had given him, Moina slipped quietly back to her little dormitory in the hamlet

CHAPTER III.

Scarcely had Moina Gordon laid her head upon the low pillow of her chamber, — if the small apartment allotted to her deserves this name,— and before sleep had visited her eyelids when ruminating upon the events of the day, while her heart palpitated as she thought of the manly form and ardent words, at parting, of Alaster Graham, her fancy wandered after him in the path she had directed him through the wood; until something shot across her recollection, at length, that made her sit up in her bed in the alarm of the moment.

"Where was my silly memory?" she said to herself, almost in agony — "that I should have forgotten to warn him of these wild scouts. Should he fall in with Black Coll, or any of his men?—but that surely cannot be; besides, his gallant courage — alas! what do I say about a stranger, and my father's enemy? Hark! there are the stealthy footsteps of those who were to have been his murderers — I have at least saved him from their bloody hands, and he is now hastening his way down Glenskiach, free as the breeze that blows from Ben-aven, and strong as the oaks of Brae Mar." Having said this, with all a maiden's feelings over the first fancy of her heart, she kissed the broken piece of gold, given her in token of more than her father's safety, and, sinking on her pillow, composed herself to sleep.

Meanwhile, every object that could be seen by the bright starlight passed rapidly from the view of the vigorous traveller as he strode hastily down the glen, or strath, that undulating in occasional irregularity of surface, and broken by clumps of stunted birch-trees, or spread out in patches of heath and grassy herbage, stretched towards the hills of Breriach, beyond the Mar-forest and the Dee. An elevated and thick part of the wood skirting the strath or holm behind him, which he never before had passed, — the part of the country in which he found himself being entirely new to Alaster, — and a bend of the river, leaving a wild and rocky height between him and the northern sky, while heavy clouds began to obscure what little starlight he had — our midnight traveller became exceedingly puzzled to find his way. As the clumps of wood thickened round him, and the ground on which he trod became more irregular and boggy, he began to lose all certainty whether he ought to turn to the right hand or to the left; or whether, in going forward, as his fancy led him in the dark, he was not returning back to the ground over which he had already passed.

He stopped once or twice, and looked carefully round him for some point or object in the dark landscape on which his eye might rest; but, well as he was accustomed to night adventures, he could make out no guide from the indefinite masses of trees, or indistinct shapes of hills which surrounded him; and as for the guiding star of the north, above him, he looked upwards for her in vain.

"I have often seen the broad face of the moon, looking pryingly down upon me and my men, when I did not want her officious illumination," he said, somewhat surlily to himself, "but she'll be sure not to show her bluff face to-night, when a glimmer of light might be a benefit to a lonesome wanderer, travelling in the night-watch, glad of his life. 'Twould be nothing strange if I should, after wearying myself to death in this wilderness, find myself again in the heart of the dangerous baille of Glenskiach. Where on earth am I going?"

Youthful need, and the chill night-breeze, again began to overcome the vigour of the dispirited wanderer, and the drowsy sensations of the soldier on his midnight march almost overpowered him with sleep. It was small hardship to Alaster to make his couch of the heath among which he was plodding in the dark, and the first knoll that his drowsy eyes could detect in the obscurity became his resting-place. The situation, however, into which chance had thrown him, was more favourable for a look-out over the dim landscape than for safe concealment; and the habits of suspicion of a Highland leader's life in those days had made watchfulness almost a second nature to Alaster, so that although he indulged a little drowsiness as he rested, his hearing and even smelling senses remained in sensitive readiness for any alarm.

Casting his half-shut eyes, ever and anon as he sat, towards that part of the night horizon which was most open, and had the greatest share of the dull starlight, he thought he could perceive something moving, which could not be single trees or any brushwood clump; for though almost asleep, he had a shrewd suspicion that trees did not travel even by night. He looked more eagerly, and then laid his ear to the ground, when he soon could plainly distinguish the short brisk motion of the Highland trot along the mossy earth, while the single figures of a company of men could, next after, be seen along the level, their heads bobbing up and down by their peculiar movement, between him and the sky.

"There is something ado in Glenskiach this night," he said to himself, as he rose hastily and adjusted the broad-sword that still hung at his belt. "I'll see what it is, if I should lose a drop of red blood for my pains"—and so saying, he strode on towards the higher part of the glen, towards which the night party seemed hastily moving.

Before he could get near them, however, the strange men who seemed to trot along nearly *in Indian file, had entered* a pass between the brushwood and the rocks, where it was only by

the acuteness of his hearing that Alaster, who dared not enter the same track, was able to follow them. Determined, however, to make himself acquainted with the meaning of this nightmarch, anxiety and curiosity, with a natural love of adventure, soon drove off his drowsy feeling, and before the party again emerged forth into cleared ground, Alaster had got before it, and was gradually drawing nearer, to ascertain, if possible, who were the men, and what was their purpose. "By the priest's mass and the prior's book!" he muttered, as he drew close upon the party, "there's death in that silence, and doom to some wretch in that measured tramp, for I see they have a bound prisoner." A light flashed across his mind, leading him to conclude that these must be the Macrabins with his man Farquhar, whose life they were going to take when they got him beyond the haunts of the Gordons, or who, in fetching thus far from his own people, they meant to tempt into treachery by an offer of mercy.

Various conjectures of this kind passed through his thoughts as he still strode forward, sometimes almost by the side, and at other times in the rear of the party. He now began to know where he was as the Highlandmen ascended to higher ground, for he heard the roar of running waters, and soon perceived the irregular windings of the Dee beneath him on the right, as those whom he watched seemed to be approaching its banks. Still they mounted as they drew near the river, and now the anxiety of Alaster became intense, as to what the party meant to do; for it was very evident the men had no intention of crossing the Dee, nor was it likely they should proceed much further, as they were evidently going out of the straight track formerly pursued. Suddenly the whole stopped when they came to the brow of a lofty bank, below which, at the distance of about an hundred and twenty feet of precipice, the dark waters of the Dee ran deep and black, scarcely reflecting a single star, which now appeared in the dull sky of the early morning.

The stout heart of the hardy youth began now almost to sicken on witnessing this, for a deed of blood seemed to him evidently in the contemplation of this night-band, and that in a form to which fair death on the battle-field must be a joy and a boon. With some difficulty he was enabled to draw near to observe the result, and at the same time avoid discovering himself, but the effort required all his skill, from the exposed situation on which the whole now stood. After various attempts to approach them by creeping on his hands and knees, he in a few minutes succeeded, by getting under the brow of the precipice which overhung the river, and scrambling among the short broom and rocks of this dangerous situation, he cautiously planted himself almost under the halted party.

When he put up his head over the bank, he could see that the whole consisted of ten men, and one bound and unarmed; eight of them standing in rank a little back from the brow of the precipice; while two of them, apart, and nearer to the place of his concealment, seemed occupied in interrogating the prisoner.

"So ye'll pe determined to pe dumb, an' dogged, to pe sure?" said a tall man with a cock's feather in his bonnet (the Highland badge of a gentleman) to the terrified prisoner, and the speaker Alaster instantly knew by his voice to be John of Leask—"an' ye'll rather drink a dead man's bellyfu' o' the black waters o' the Dee, than tell us who cut the thongs an' the hemp frae Alaster Graham this night?"

"I cannot tell though I would—that's God's truth"—said poor Farquhar, appalled at the prospect before him—"and I would not though I could," he added, with Highland resolution.

The two Celtic leaders looked at each other in momentary uncertainty, as they stepped two paces aside: "By my soul there's naething else but witchery an' glaumory in it"—said the other, in the superstitious spirit of the times—"Grumach Gordon aye said, that nothing but warlock spells could save that rash Sassenach callant—what shall we do?"

"Do? what would ye do, after coming all this way," said John of Leask with dark ferocity, "but put a stane in his plaid, and gie him the prisoner's douk in the black linn below. He'll ne'er rise again like a mermaid out of the cauld waters, to tell the Earl of Mar where the red-deer smokes in the Gordon's pot, or where Alaster Graham was unbound by the witches—but hist! try if he'll show us the secret pass to the grey cove where the Mar's men meet—life is sweet, and the bottom o' the Dee is a cauld bed."

The two went back to their wretched prisoner, and put to him another question or two, in words which our concealed hero could not distinctly hear, but evidently in vain; upon which, making a sign to the body of the men, they all came forward, and with strange cruelty pro-

eeded to unloose his arms in preparing him for death, while they began to tie the plaid and a stone, fetched by one of them, round the doomed man's neck.

While all this was going on Alaster was more occupied with a feeling of uncontrollable vengeance, than such horror as might have been expected from witnessing such a scene, and as usual, the recklessness of conscious valour, to which all fear was a stranger, prevented him from exercising that prudence which would have been resorted to by less daring spirits.

"You will not speak the word then?" said John of Leask, dragging the unfortunate man forward to the edge—"see you—there's grim Death with his dart watching for you at the deep bottom of that crag—and you may already hear, if your ears are good, the water kelpies of the flood singing your death-song to the night-wind. If you have father or mother to greet for you when ye're dead, better join the Gordons an' the Macrabins of the wood, than sleep at the bottom o' the cauld waters o' the Dee."

"I've neither father nor mother to greet for me," said the poor fellow, "nor wife nor sister that loves me, but my braw young master, Alaster Graham, an' he disna know the pass I am brought to this dismal night; to be drowned like a dog under the cloud of darkness. Oh, if he were here now!" and in the weakness of nature and the dread of his doom, a tear started into the eyes of the faithful Highlander, while he wrung his hands as he looked over the horrid precipice, beneath where he stood among the group of his executioners.

A shrill whistle, sounding from under the brow of the crag, startled the party with apprehension, at the moment they were lifting up Farquhar to throw him over into the linn; and in another instant after Alaster, with his drawn broad-sword in his hand, had sprung into the midst of the astonished Highlanders. Well did the doomed Farquhar know the figure and sword-hand of his master, the instant clash of swords aroused him to free himself from the entanglement of his plaid, and soon the fall of one of the foremost of the party, under Alaster's arm, enabled him to possess himself of a weapon, and to join this strange and unequal contest.

The party had given way on the first onset of Alaster, conceiving, as by his preliminary whistle he intended they should, that there was a number more in ambush ready to join him; but in a few moments, seeing none other, they all began to press hard upon the two combatants, who, in spite of the most valorous efforts, were gradually driven back towards the edge of the precipice. Alaster now saw, as he often had before, the dangerous effects of rashly trusting to valour alone, and his imprudence in not at least taking up his position at first where the party should have been between himself and the river. It was, however, now too late, for the Highlandmen soon drove him and his single companion to the very edge, and as Alaster at last fought on the defensive only, against such numbers, although he had laid two dead at his feet, while struggling to protect himself from five or six swords, he saw poor Farquhar driven over the edge by one of them, for both fell together down the precipice, and in another instant, after some struggling and rustling among the brushwood of the steep bank he heard a heavy plunge, as of one falling into the deep waters of the linn below. Making now a sudden and desperate effort, he grasped the foremost man with whom he was engaged, and dragged him with him down the fearful steep. Here his great strength became the means of his own safety, for, disengaging himself from the grip of his antagonist as they rolled down the steep, he was enabled, by clinging to the short broom that grew among the crags, to arrest his progress; and as he hung, he heard, first one and then another succeeding plunge into the dull waters far below him.

The wild shout of the deer-stalkers above him, struck upon his ears with an appalling sensation, as he hung over the precipice and clung to the broom with desperate efforts, and their still wilder lament over two of their companions who had been drowned in the Dee, besides the two whom his own sword had deprived of life above the bank; but he thought sadly of his poor servant, who in spite of all his efforts seemed to have met his death beneath the black waters that now murmured softly far beneath him. He heard John of Leask and his men shortly after withdraw from the scene of this unfortunate conflict, bearing away the bodies of their two companions, and soon finding the coast clear, by great exertion, and with danger as imminent as he had yet encountered, he at length succeeded in again gaining safe footing on the summit of the precipice. Creeping under the brushwood that grew near the height, Alaster again laid himself down on the fragrant heath, and composing himself as well as he could, after so many troubles, he slept soundly until the sun had risen some height above the bald brow of the romantic summit of Loch-na-gar.

CHAPTER IV.

"THERE can be no doubt but it was witchery and glaumory that loosed the cords of Alaster the Sassenach last night," was the cry among the Highland women in the forest-hamlet, or baille of Glenskiach, on the morning after the foregoing transactions, as they mourned over the bodies of those that had been slain; "and the powers of darkness," said they in their song "and the powers of the air, and the wild spirits o' the wood, and the greengown fairies o' the brakes, that dance in the moonlight, and sing madrigals to the north star—that ken whaure the storm is brewing behint Ben-aw, or whaure the ships are to be sunk in the bay o' Dornoch; an' lay down their little ears to the sounding earth, and listen to the dead man's groan—an' laugh at the gurgle in his throat, as he drowns beneath the wave—it was they loosened the thongs frae the Sassenach's feet, an' threw glaumor o'er the sight o' Donald Gordon that watched at the door; and saw nane enter, and nobody go out; and yet the prisoner was gane and his bands with him, and appeared at the brow of the black rock aboon the Dee, an' fought wi' the strength o' seven devils, an' killed our braw hunter lads, and drowned them in the linn below—ochon! ochon! ochon—aree!"—And thus the wild lamentation rose and sounded through the woody valley of Glenskiach.

But a very different sound was heard in the great hall of the castle of Braemar, upon the return of Alaster Graham, with the news of his adventure, and of the sad fate of his servant Farquhar. "We'll scour the woods of these greedy Gordons," was the universal cry, "until not a man of them shall remain, from the crags of Glen-vioch to the water o' Dee; and the wild Macrabins shall be rooted from the land, from Ben-aw to Balmorral, and chased through the Mar-forest, like the bounding deer that flies before the shaft of the marksman—giving his flesh to the hungry hunter, and his branching antlers for a trophy of success."

All was therefore bustle and preparation at the castle of Braemar, and thirty stout Highlanders, of different clans, were soon selected and appointed by the Earl himself, under the command of Alaster, to take vengeance on the marauding reivers of the forest. "I have borne with these thievish deer-stalkers too long," said the earl, in a private interview with the youthful commander of the party, "and particularly with that veteran knave, Grumach Gordon. Root out him and his marauders from the heart of the forest, and if they resist, as they are likely to do, spare him and his as little as they do the red stag of the wood—dost thou hesitate?"

"No, my lord," said Alaster, "but the Gordons are an ancient and a noble clan, and spread far and wide over Scotland's glens and vallies; and Grumach is——"

"An old villain! that dares me to the teeth!" interrupted the earl angrily. "Harkee, young man—rid me of that forest plague, or look me not in the face again. What! Thou wert not wont to blench at a drop of red blood, Alaster! Remember thou art the ranger of my good forest, and I know thou canst slice the head off a Highland reiver as deftly as I can cut down a prickly thistle. Go!—thou knowest my thought."

The youth bowed himself respectfully before the earl and departed; but as he went, the golden token that he wore upon his breast felt as if it would turn its sharp edge into his own flesh, and the blue eyes of Moina Gordon seemed to beam on him, and to plead for mercy for father and for mother, in language which shot through every nerve of his frame. But he and his Highlanders were soon on the march, and as they moved along over moor and dale, and breathed the fresh breeze that swept down the heath from the cliffs of Cairntoul, the bold spirit of his men, and the excitement of the expedition, were so delightful, that, trusting to circumstances and his own strong arm for the ultimate safety of his principal foe, he entered briskly the precincts of the forest of Mar, thinking less of war than of love, and less of the great object of his enterprise than of the yellow locks of Moina Gordon.

A forest has, from time immemorial, been a favourite spot with chroniclers and tale-tellers, as the scene of all sorts of romantic adventures; but the great forests of Germany or of eastern France, the lofty pine-woods of the Pyrenees or the Alps, or the thick and venerable masses of vegetation that afforded shelter for the military robbers on the banks of the Rhine, are very different from that wild mixture of low woodland, heath, and steep crag, green patches of herbage on which the deer browses, and black and dangerous bogs and marshes, which constitute the wilderness tract called a Highland forest. But though less magnificent and awful

than the great German woods, or the lofty and endless forests of North America, these natural wildernesses of the Highlands of Scotland present a variety of feature, and a romance of effect and of situation, which has peculiar charms for the free rover of these wilds, and is the delight of the imaginative Celt of the north.

The party had not penetrated far into the wood, when the sight of the deer bounding through the passes, and rushing in crowds along the open glades of the wilderness, with the occasional whirr of the game which started in coveys at their feet, stirred up the spirits of Alaster's followers for the chase, and instantly changed for a time all thoughts of the slogan of strife into the gay and cheerful halloo of the hunter.

Away they all soon went, therefore, in scattered groups among the bushes, for a powerful Highland hunger having by this time entered their stomachs, from the effects of the morning's march, no effort of their youthful commander could restrain the eagerness of his men, stimulated as they were by so many potent excitements. But few guns being at this time possessed by the inhabitants of these northern regions, the bow and arrow were chiefly used for wounding at a distance, and the shafts that flew in every quarter around them as they rejoiced in the sport soon provided the party with ample and substantial seasoning to the small portions of oatmeal which each man carried in a bag slung behind him.

The forest now rang with the shouts of the new deer-hunters, which became fainter to each group as they receded from each other, and became hidden in the entangling intricacies of the wood. The delight of the hunt soon proved as seducing to Alaster as it was to the most eager of his comrades; and cautious prudence being no part of his character, he, in the eagerness of the chase, lost all command of his men, and even knowledge where most of them were, three or four followers only being ultimately within sight, who made any answer to such calls as he now thought it safe to make in this part of the forest. A noble buck, upon which he had fixed his eyes, having taken a direction separate from the others, he and those immediately near him were led to pursue it down an irregular bank beside a small stream, which wound its way through an open part of the wood, in order to get a fair shot at it; but it being no easy matter to follow such an animal "by speed of foot," Alaster was ultimately far parted from the main body, and deeply entangled in the depths of the wilderness.

By the time therefore that the buck fell under the shafts of its eager followers, and the small group were proceeding to carry it away from the spot, the triumph of Alaster was not a little damped, on perceiving that he could form no idea of the direction which he now ought to take, and that the shrill sounds of his whistle were only answered by the echoes that reverberated from the deep solitudes of the wood.

"Come along, Colin," he said at length to the follower who, since Farquhar's death, had become his favourite, "lay the beast on thy shoulders, and let us turn up this bank: when we come to the higher and more open part of the wood, no doubt my thoughtless cearnachs will soon reply to the call of my whistle."

The little company of four persons vigorously set forth and mounted the bank, the wild solitude echoing to their tread, and the rising autumnal breeze beginning to sweep with rustling freshness through the openings in the forest. But still no sign of living creature appeared, for the red deer themselves had been frightened off by the shouts of the whole party, the grey fox dared not to howl until night spread in indistinct darkness over the fastnesses of the forest, and Alaster now began to hesitate whether he would continue to mount to the highest ground near, for the chance of recovering his men; or whether, by returning to the stream below, and following its course, he should simply try to ascertain his position in the wood. After consulting for a few moments with his men, he soon determined, as usual, on the bolder course and perceiving a tract which led to an open spot on his right, he pursued it steadily, notwithstanding the weariness of his followers, convinced that he was drawing near to the very innermost recesses of these wilds.

"Deevil a leg can we lift mair," grumbled one of his men to his neighbour, that their leader might hear him; "besides, what is the use o' this lowlander's march, without a crowdy in the wame, or a snuff in the nose, when we're famish'd wi' the starve, an' no a pan to make a broth o' the beastie?" he added, looking ruefully to the dead buck under which the hindmost man began to waddle with weary discontent. "Just lay her down, Colin my lad, an' tell the young duinuasal, she'll no gang a foot farther."

The man did not require a second hint to turn dogged, so throwing the buck with a bound on the sod, he refused to trudge another step, unless, as he said, "Master Alaster would let him comfort himself with a slice or two off the hurdies of the venison beast, whilk was needful now for their refreshment;" besides, as the man argued, it being much easier for gentlemen hunters to carry their food in the place appropriated for it, than for each man to bear it on his neck like a lowland flesher.

The perils of the place, and the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, began to be perceived by the youthful leader, thus separated from the body of his men, and obliged to take up his quarters at the close of the day in a part of the forest unknown to him, and where his few followers were every instant liable to be surrounded and cut off by the bold deer stalkers, Gordons and Macrabins and all, who were intimate with every pass and turning within the bosom of the wood. "If we must stop and rest," he said, looking round him, and seeing the necessity of giving way to circumstances, "it shall not be here; we must not in this expedition sculk like cravens in the glen, for however small our numbers, I will never play any other than a bold game. See you, lads, yonder bushy rock that raises its tufted head like a black feather in the heart of the wood?—let us up to the top of the crags, and kindle our fire and roast our buck. It will be a candle to light the steps of our own men to find us; for we shall raise a flame in the midst of the forest, that shall be seen even from the turrets of old Braemar."

"Lord-sake, Maister Alaster," said an old Highlander, "ye'll no mean to light up a low here amang the trees, just to show the wild Gordons, an' a' other reivers, frae Inverey to Abersmithak, that here we are four puir chields, that'll no be a mouthful to thae warricows o' the wud."

"Huisht, huisht, Donald!" said the youth familiarly, "I know it's ill speaking to a Highlandman with an empty stomach, but wait till you and I get a picking off the ribs of that dead venison, and a thow o' heat from a cheerful bleeze before us, and I'll warrant we'll be able to look down frae the tap o' that crag on Grumach Gordon himsel an' a' his men. Up, lads! 'mount an' go,' as the Sassenach sang says."

Up the four mounted to the top of the craggy hill, and flint and steel being a part of their travelling equipment, in a few minutes the crackling fire began to cheer the weather-beaten faces of the Highlandmen, who smiled grimly with pleasure as they saw the smoke and blaze arise above the woods, while, like other travellers in the desert, they roasted collops cut off the venison on the nearest embers, with which, ever and anon, they stayed their hunger. Besides this, they were not even without a drop of the clear dew, so specially a distillation of the mountains of the north, which one of them supplied, with little ceremony in the application from the mouth-piece of a good-sized bullock's horn, that was slung beneath the small sheepskin bag under his arm, and which latter held also a modicum of oaten meal, both being the constant companions, if possible, of a Highlandman's journey.

"Faith, lads, this same is a comfort an' a consolation after our day's wark," said Colin Macrone to his two neighbours, as they sat gazing in the cheerful blaze of the fire.

"What wark?" said the third jeeringly; "I wonder what gude we've done for the auld Earl this day, wandering here in the woods just like what I've heard Mass John tell o' Auld Dauvit, the king o' the Chews, or Nebechud-neighbour, that was banished to the fields, an' took up his quarters wi' the prute peasts, for want o' a decent lodgings. So here are we in the enemy's land, cocked up on the tap o' a coggly crag, just for a mark to be shot at like a capper-cuilzie, wi' the long arrows o' thae crafty Gordons. Faith, lads, ye've picked your last bane, an' drank your last toothfu', I'm thinking;" and in illustration of his grumbling remark, this learned Highlander took his last tug at a spaul of the venison which he held, and then threw the bone angrily into the fire.

"See you how gloriously the flame mounts, and illuminates the dark foliage of the forest, from Braemar to Glenskiach!" said Alaster with admiration, as he watched the effects of their fire on the reddened objects around. "The remainder of our lads cannot be far off, and they must obey this signal beacon-light;—but rest you, my men, and I will watch; for from this point, while our fire blazes, I can see the very birds as they go to their soft nests on the branches beneath us, and the cautious badger could not look out of his hole near, but I should know it."

"Young callants are aye confident," whispered the wise Highlander with a Gaelic "humph!" through his nose, a sound that was exceedingly expressive, to his approving companions; but

as Highland shentlemen, of that day in particular, were nowise disturbed at the idea of losing their lives "the night afore the morn," as they were wont to express it, taking their chance as usual, all now round the fire, excepting their leader, laid themselves down to sleep without the slightest anxiety.

It needs no Highland seer to tell, that the confidence natural to youth and a brave spirit, while it is sometimes the cause of surprising success, is by the ordinary operation of things much oftener the occasion of sad disaster. The foundation of it in Alaster on this occasion could not be expected to last long in any vigour, for overcoming sleep will deprive the sharpest eyes of their keenness, and the brightest blaze of light to assist the sight in darkness will die away, unless fed with materials not obtained without trouble even in a Highland wood. Accordingly the comfortable indolence occasioned by the heat of the fire, soon had the effect of dulling the exertion necessary to keep it in vigour; and as the flame before him began to get low, and the surrounding objects to become lost in the obscurity, the increasing difficulty of keeping his look-out with any intensity, caused the drowsy leader to seek for excuses for relaxing in his watchfulness, until he fairly began to nod at his post.

"Since the rest of my men have not made their appearance," he said to himself, "we must each take our turn at this weary watch," and then he shook by the shoulders each of the three who now snored beside him; but for the present that was a vain endeavour, for the philosophic mountaineers, having previously made up their minds to die or live, just as Providence might order it, seemed determined to give themselves no trouble, particularly during sleep, whether they were to rise again with their lives, or "pe killed the night like shentlemans."

As a few brands still continued to crackle dimly on the fire, the near objects on the summit of the crag began to assume all shapes to the half-closed eyes of the watcher; the bushes and rocks became reddish black, and brownish grey, in their grotesque indistinctness; and the dark outline of the surrounding forest which he overlooked, appeared almost to unite with the dull starlight of the heavy midnight sky. Sometimes the weary watcher thought he heard the birds below as if whispering to each other among the bushes, and again he thought the red deer seemed to be clambering up the crag to obtain a heat from his fire; but he imagined at times that they almost had the faces of men, and appeared to nod with plumed heads instead of antlers of horn, as if the four-footed creatures were making signs to each other.

Suddenly as he gazed around in his watch, one of the short stumps of trees below on the crag began evidently to move, which greatly surprised him; and as he opened wider his eyes to observe this phenomena, the sprouting branches remaining on the object, began to look, the upper one first, exceedingly like the cock's feather on the front of a Highland gentleman's bonnet, and then the branches below to resemble the end of a bow and the feathery heads of arrows. Next after, something like a nose projected from near the top, as the stump evidently moved upwards, and two shining things on each side began, like glow-worms, or like human eyes, to reflect the bedimmed light of the fire.

The drowsy watcher, as he sat, was puzzling his dreamy reason to account for so remarkable an occurrence, when suddenly he found himself seized on behind, evidently in the clutch of a wild beast, while half a dozen more stumps appeared to rise up from among the bushes around, and in another instant a shout was set up from the bottom of the crag, so hoarse and wild that it half stunned, half awaked him, into startled recollections, for in it he recognised the cath-ghairm or war-cry of the clan of the Gordons, which sounded up in a shout from the heart of the forest, while himself and his little party were surrounded by nearly twenty persons, and at once taken prisoner without a blow. A strong arm held him fast in its gripe behind, while another bound a cord around him; and as, finding it useless to resist, he cast his eyes round upon the face that, as one was tying his arms, grinned with a triumphant laugh upon him, he recognised, by the faint glare of the fire, the strongly marked features of old Grumach Gordon.

"Hagh!—agh!—she has her noo!" exclaimed the veteran deer-stalker, chuckling with joy as he pulled the cords round the body of the astonished youth. "If the sassenach callant doesna mend her manners noo, she'll ne'er see the auld castle o' Braemar ony more."

"Is that the chance ye give a brave man for his life, to bind his arms for fear he should harm you, and take his sword because you dare not meet it?" said Alaster, scowling in scorn on his adversary.

"We dinna feght incarnate deevils, an' witchcraft, an' glaumory," said the chieftain know-

ingly; "the Gordons dinna deal with the horned-ane, or kindle fires under the cloud of night, and mutter spells in the dark wood; but ye shall have your sword, young man, in broad daylight, for I have my revenge to take out of you before ye leave the baille o' Glenskiach. Forward, my lads, wi' your prisoners!"

The four reluctant captives (for the other three of Alaster's party had been bound almost in their sleep) were led or rather dragged down the steep of the crag, at the bottom of which they were met by a number more of the Gordons and Macrabins, who placing them in the centre with another grin of satisfaction, the whole began to march forward in silence through the wood.

"Are ye leeving yet? or are ye dead, Donald?" said Colin Macrone to his nearest neighbour, as they rustled their way through the bushes. "Bite your finger, man, an' try if ye be dreaming or waking."

"How can I bite my finger?" said the other sulkily, "when I canna put up a claw to scratch my ain head when it itches? not having the use of my arms, as ye see, but left to stoitre through the wood in the dark, and trussed up wi' a tow, just like moor-hen for the spit—teevil take it!"

"Hoogh!—ye'll be hang't the morn, Donald, so never heed," rejoined his neighbour, consolingly; "but may be they'll do us the pleasure to shoot us with poother an' lead. Oh! but that would be a pleasant, an' a shentlemany death, lads; but it's o'er gude for the likes o' us."

"It was a God's mercy that we got sic a meal o' the venison, lads," said the third, in a low voice; "the collops were sae sweet when bristled in the fire last night. It's a meeserable uncomfortable thing to be hang't wi' a hungry belly."

"Oigh! may be we'll no be just hang't this time," said Colin, gaily; "see you how proudly maister Alaster walks, though he's girded round like a sauted ham? odd, if I could only get my right hand up to pick my lug, or my twa fingers in my mouth to gie the reiver's whistle, I would try whether there's aught in the wood but wild cats an' badgers. I say, lads, whisper."

"What is't?" said the others; "huisht; they'll hear us."

"Let us all three set up a skraigh"——

"What fore, Colin? eh? Lord, they'll murder us."

"Deevil may care! better to be murdered decently at night, than to be hang't the morn's morning. Set up a skraigh, I say, that may be heard to the very gates o' Braemar. There's some gude'll come o't:—here goes, all at once, hoo-uigh!"

The screech with which the three Highlanders most unexpectedly disturbed the dead silence of the night, almost startled the very leaves on the trees, and roused the birds in their nests, as it echoed away in the dells of the forest; darkness itself seemed for a moment to give way to the sound, and strange noises to arise in the distance, which might indeed be the rustling of the red-deer or some other prowlers of the wood.

"The Lord pe near us! Got tamn! what's that?" exclaimed old Grumach Gordon and several others on the instant, as they stopped short in astonishment at the shout, "that's witchery an' glaumory again; kill the Marsmen, kill them at once!"

"Hui-uigh!" shouted the Highlanders a second time, in which their leader, taking the hint, now heartily joined, while the Gordons for an instant were perfectly paralyzed; and before the echo had died away in the distant hollows of the wood, a rustling was heard on the left of the party, figures appeared to start out among the trees, and in another instant the partial silence was again disturbed by a broken and somewhat running shout, set up at no great distance, as if meant for an answer to the random screech of the Mars-men.

The Gordons appeared now to be in utter confusion, not knowing which way to turn, or whether to attack or defend themselves from the unseen enemy, if enemy it were, or whether to turn their swords upon their shouting prisoners, who seemed patiently to wait the issue of their strange experiment. A figure or two began to draw near. "Huragh for Braemar! and down with the reivers of the wood!" shouted Alaster, starting forth from the side of Grumach Gordon.

"Braemar! Braemar!" shouted also the strangers, who could not now be mistaken: and in a few moments a rush of them came close upon the position of the terrified Gordons.

"Braemar! Braemar!" answered, in return, the three prisoners in the centre of the party; taking advantage of the confusion, and rushing in a body against those who guarded them, they, without a stroke being aimed at them, succeeded in forcing a passage towards their own party, who now began to fit shafts to their bow-strings, and prepare for a general combat in the dark.

The Marsmen, however, afraid of killing any of their own, rushed in among the Gordons sword in hand. The clashing of their weapons now sounded through the wood; the deer-reivers gave way everywhere, uncertain of the number of their assailants and hardly able even to distinguish each other, while the whole skirmish was rather an unmanly confusion than a creditable strife.

"Hold off! my men! come hither, and leave this disgraceful skirmishing, now as we are none of us longer prisoners," shouted Alaster; "the Marsmen do not willingly meet their enemies in the dark, and if Grumach Gordon will leave me and my three comrades the claymores that they took from us when they surprised us on the crag, we shall meet again in broad day, when I shall deliver to him the Earl of Mar's pleasure, with good will to fight if that be necessary, but with better to spare the drawing of blood."

"I scorn to keep the arms of those who seem more in league with the black devil than with the Earl of Mar himself," said Grumach, throwing down the sword of Alaster on the sod, "but blood only, if it can be spilt fairly on the field, shall satisfy the mind and avenge the affronts put upon me, Grumach Gordon. And so, young man, I bid thee heartily defiance. Come, lads, the Gordons will yet have their day with these men."

Thus saying, the old reiver led off his men, while Alaster and his followers soon again stretched themselves on the driest part of the bank: here the whole rested on their arms till the clear light of day shone down between the trees, and showed to the first who were awake the beauty of several open copses in the surrounding forest.

CHAPTER V.

The morning was somewhat advanced ere the Highland party in the wood could rouse themselves from the heavy slumbers that succeeded all the toilsome adventures of the previous day and night, and considerably farther ere the men were in readiness to resume their march towards the habitations of the reivers in Glenskiach. The ground on which they had slept for some hours, though soft, was damp and cold, the limbs of the sleepers when they wakened were stiff and ached with fatigue, the autumnal morning was raw and chill, and the Farquharsons and M'Crones, of whom the party was chiefly composed, stretched themselves and rubbed their benumbed arms and legs, as they looked around them in the silent and solitary forest, and curled their noses in each other's faces with true Highland sulkiness and discontent. Not a fire was yet lighted to cheer them; for the green smoking wood, round which a few of them gathered, would not burn; the tall Scotch firs, under the prickly foliage of which they had lain, excluded the faint beams of the morning sun from the gloomy spot where they were crowded together; and the distant openings in the thick forest only served to let in upon the party a snell stream of mountain wind, which had completely parted with its caloric, as it passed over the snowy summits of Ben-Nevis and Benaw.

"It's tamn'd meeserable this!" said Colin M'Crone to his neighbour; the ludicrous curl which drew up his nose as he spoke elevating also the drop which hung at the point of it. "My houghs are caulder than my haunds, and my haunds are caulder than my hurdies," he added, essaying to rub his bare knees, which the kilt he wore was not intended to cover, with his red fists, which never had known a glove; "Donald! shake the scarrag anoth your oxter, and see if there be a drap o' the bluid o' barley left."

"Teevil a drap," growled Donald, shaking the empty flask. "An' the very snuff is frozen in the mull! Tamn the Gordons an' the Macrabins! I tell'd you, Colin, that we're waur aff here in the wud than auld Nepechud-neighbour, when he gaed to live wi' the prute peasts: I'm saying, lads"——

"What is't ye'll say noo?" was the other's reply.

"She'll be a bad cheneral, that Alaster, I'm thinking," continued Donald, "to pring us into sic a place as this, wi' naething but cauld an' hunger; an' us made prisoners at our ain fire-side last night, without a stroke o' the claymore for the honour o' Braemar, an' to be march'd through the wud wi' a ropes about her middle, an' her haunds tied behint her back, like a veal calf; cot tamn! It's not like the usage o' a shentlemans."

"What'll she mean to do then?" inquired the other, his Highland suspicion also roused. "Will she turn her back, an' gae hame?"

"Noh, noh, indeed, but if she dissa get a fleg at the Gordons the day afore the morrow, she'll may-be begin to think her ain thoght."

"Get up, lads! up!" shouted a Farquharson, who acted as lieutenant under Alaster. "Forget you the work we have to do before the sun that's long before us droops behint the Grampians?"

"What wark, Maister Lauchey?" growled Donald askance, as the lieutenant passed him; but the musterer was too busy to heed the query, and too wise to notice the murmurs which in several places began to assume a mutinous appearance, among the grumbling groups of this rude encampment.

When the smoke of two or three fires began to ascend, however, and the Highlanders had got a few mouthfuls of the venison and game, which had been shot in abundance by the larger party the day previous, they began to grin with satisfaction in each other's faces, and to show their restored good-humour by sporting sundry gibes and jokes, which were much more enjoyed among themselves than they could be by our southland readers; who albeit have but small relish for Highland wit, particularly through the medium of our attempted translation into such anglicised Scotch as might make it understood. Suffice it to say, that by the time the men had made and partaken of their various crowdys and oaten cakes, and their savoury stews of the flesh of the game, with a stiff dram of the indispensable usquebaugh, they found both their tempers and their valour greatly improved, and set forth towards the haunt of the Gordons in Glenskiach with vigorous strides and high hopes of the issue of their expedition.

Coming soon after to an open part of the forest, they mounted a rugged height, and Alaster surveyed with delight the romantic variety of the wild scenery before him, which on the right swept away over woods and glens towards the braes of Abernethy, and on his left the view became lost in the rugged fastnesses of the forest of Athol. He now began to understand with greater precision the localities of the extensive district of the Mar-wood, and was somewhat vexed that he should have been, on the previous night, surprised by the Gordon's men at such a distance from the little valley or woody covert of Glenskiach.

Into one end of this glen the party now began to descend; and various contending thoughts and undefined purposes by degrees occupied the mind of its youthful leader, as he surveyed, in occasional peeps through the covert, the distant windings of the Dee, and meditated on his night-adventure in the neighbourhood, and on all that interested him regarding Moina Gordon. His broodings became more and more serious, as he drew near to the spot where she dwelt, and as he thought of his own circumstances, as leader of a party sent for the express purpose of killing, or banishing (a much more difficult matter) him whom he had vowed to protect, and who, whatever else he might be, was still the father of one becoming dearer to his thoughts every moment.

The small green plat, in front of the little assemblage of houses, or rather bothys, where the deer-reivers lived, now opened out in the wood in front of the party, and Alaster heard, with some concern, the bitter vows of his followers as they approached the baille, of what they were determined to do with the lawless spoilers of the forest, so soon as, in a fair fray, they could get them within the strokes of their claymores. But no one as yet appeared near, not even a child played before the doors, or an old woman was seen to water her yarn or spread her clothes on the little green in front of the hamlet; nor had a single Gordon been observed or heard in the wood during the march of the morning.

There seemed something strange in the eyes of Alaster, if not ominous, in all this. Not even the slightest wreath of smoke seemed to curl from the wattled chimneys of the bothys as the party drew up in front, and it was evident that either the place was deserted by the deer-stalkers, or they had allowed their enemies to get thus near, in order the more effectually to entrap them by some concerted ambuscade.

Taking with him Colin M'Crone and another, Alaster, however, left his party, and fearlessly entered, as before, the principal building of the baille.

A very different scene now presented itself, in the interior of this barn-like house, from what he had witnessed on his former visit. All seemed waste and desolate. The fire was extinguished that had formerly blazed so cheerfully, although its embers were still warm on the floor; and instead of the numerous tiers of hams hanging overhead, the blackened rafters of the building were exposed bare and unsightly under the dark thatched roof, which could scarcely be distinguished by the dim light that entered through the well-stuffed windows.

Some rude furniture, including several large pots and earthen vessels, were found in this and the other houses; but not a living creature was to be seen, save a pair of large black cats, who scarcely attempted to move, but sat staring with their green eyes upon the intruders, and in Alaster's apprehension, agreeable to the superstition of the period, had a look of ill omen with them, as if they represented the living spirit of a vengeance predicting desolation.

The whole party now took possession of the hamlet, at least for the present; and foreseeing that they might have a hungry enough time of it, before their present expedition was brought to a close, they were determined to eat and drink while they had the opportunity: so, before many minutes had elapsed, the chimneys smoked as briskly as ever they had done for the Gordons, and the venison was soon after stewing and boiling on the several hearths of the bothys.

"Shall we take up our quarters here, maister, if ye please, or shall we not?" said Colin M'Crone to Alaster, as the latter sat thoughtfully by himself, after their meal was over. "It's a gude hame enough in the wud, an' wha kens whare we may catch thae reiver-hunters? The red deer are no half sae cunning, though may-be they can rin faster, and we may chase them frae Abernethy to Aberdeen, wi' nought but weary shanks an' hungry hotchells for our pains."

"Wherever we go, we shall not remain here, Colin," said his leader, soberly, "within the heart of the snare that the Gordons have laid for us. Trust me, this unexpected manœuvre bodes no good to the success of our expedition. But we must even now be up, and setting forth. Up, my lads! Up, and go again. There's many a step between the water of Durig and the birks o' Braemar."

In a short time they were on the road again, or rather tramping through the brambly passes of the forest; two trusty men having in the meantime been dispatched in different directions to obtain intelligence of the position and movements of the reivers. But every step they proceeded the mind of Alaster became more and more uneasy concerning the end and object of this strange expedition, in which he was acting so unwilling, and yet apparently so cruel and deceitful a part; and his feelings became, as he went, deeply affected by his constant meditations on the present fate and future destiny of his pretty deliverer, the maiden of the forest, Moina Gordon.

CHAPTER VI.

As day closed in, Alaster Graham again halted his party under the shelter of a green knoll, still further towards the verge of the forest, and near the border of a small lake, or rather stripe of deep water, such as is often found in the fastnesses of the Highlands. Having posted watchers, one on the knoll, and several others at proper points near, to prevent his being surprised while he arranged future operations, he allowed his men to stretch themselves on the heath, and take their rest. A single fire had been kindled in a sort of recess indented into the knoll, and, as the men slept around, a succession of reflections bordering on sadness occupied the moody and restless thoughts of the leader of the expedition.

What these thoughts referred to needs little detail, when the circumstances of the youth are considered, in regard to his noble kinsman, who had sent him to root out the Gordons from the forest, to his future fame and fortune, which so much depended upon his fulfilling his present duty, should he be allowed to take a part in the war in the Lowlands, of which he had formerly heard some distant rumours, and even to his character with his men, over whom he had accepted the command in this expedition, and who were bitterly zealous against the reiver-chief, whom he had undertaken to expel or to kill, after having vowed to be his individual protector.

At the bottom of all this was a feeling, which was as usual painful, because it was encompassed with anxiety, and alloyed with untoward apprehension; and yet delightful, because it was new, and the novelty consisted in the romance of imagined perfection in woman, in a world where all else is imperfect. It was the heavenly dream of impassioned affection and fond friendship, where all else seemed to him coldness, self-interest, or avowed hate. Though strong and manly in person, the present was but the blossom of Alaster's life, and the novel sensation of love, mingling with grateful feelings to his pretty deliverer, came over his soul like touching music, amidst the solitudes of the Mar-forest, and became deepened with the increasing thoughtfulness of manhood, and the necessary anxieties and responsibilities of his situation.

As he sat thus meditating, the man placed at the top of the knoll descended hastily down,

and assuming an air of some importance, when he drew near, as if he had a mystery to communicate, said in a half whisper,

"As sure's death! captain, there's something yonder!'

"Where?"

"Just beyont the cairn, on the brae-face; come and see."

Alaster mounted the knoll, and looked forth, with as much success as the hazy light would admit of, but could see nothing remarkable. "What was it you saw?" he inquired sharply.

"It was a man, or it was a natural moving thing, or may-be it was a ghaist," said the simple Highlander.

"Poh! mind your duty. It is not ghosts you are to look out for," said Alaster, rather peevishly.

"It's the God's truth," said the man, indignant at his leader's want of faith. "I saw it wi' my een, moving amang the breckans aboon the loch. If it wasna for that blinking shred o' a moon, ye would see it yoursel. But deel-be-licked, I'll send a shaft through its wame, whatever it is," added the man, setting his bow in order.

"You'll do no such thing without a challenge, and I giving the word," said Alaster, unwilling to trust so much to the discretion of the Highlander.

This false alarm having disturbed his reflections, however, after descending to where his men slept in the hollow, he took a turn round the foot of the little hill, towards the margin of the small pool or lake, whose clear waters lay cold and still at the foot of the slope; and scarcely could be said to reflect the dim beam from what the Highland sentinel had justly called a shred of a moon, which seemed to mock the wild landscape with her faint gleam of hazy light.

The silence was so perfect, in this open solitude of the forest, that every tread of Alaster's foot on the hollow sod, as he wandered some way towards the margin of the lake, under cover of the shadows of some straggling birch-trees, seemed to carry a loud and unwelcome echo, that gave note of his every step, to some distance round. As he looked forth over the light end of the pool, he plainly observed a long shadow move slowly beyond some brushwood between him and the shore. Stopping suddenly, the shadow also stopped, and he heard the low, but clear "ahem!" of a woman's voice proceed from a few paces' distance beyond the brushwood. A thought instantly struck him! and starting at once into the open moonlight, and passing the bushes, he perceived a female wrapped in the long plaid or sagum of the Highlands, her head covered with it as a hood, in the fashion of the north; and as she stood to await his approach, he soon discovered the well-remembered features of Moina Gordon.

"Come not a step nearer," she said, holding up her hand, "unless you come to assure me, before Heaven, who looks down upon us, that you are not my father's enemy, and the foe of my clan, and that you mean to keep the vow you made to me in your own hour of trouble."

He said not a word, as he gazed on her for a moment with sudden excitement, but thrusting his hand into his bosom, and taking out the token which hung by a ribbon from his neck, he held it in the light of the moon; then kissing it fervently, he looked up to heaven, and murmured an ejaculation, that the great God who watched over them both would be pleased to send a sudden calamity upon him if he kept not the vow which he now renewed.

The fervent solemnity of the action was so unexpected, and to the romantic Highland maiden seemed so noble, that clasping her hands together as she gazed, the tears rushed into her eyes, and in the passion of the moment, unable to obtain from her any common salute, Alaster's arm wound round her waist, and yielding passively to her feelings she sobbed in his embrace.

"Then you are not my enemy, nor my father's persecutor, after all, Alaster," she said, looking up, as she dried her tears, "yet you have made us flee like the startled deer from the warm covey of Glenskiach; and the landless exiles of the old Gordons are hiding themselves in rocks and coves of the earth, from the face of him who, but for me, would have been this night a buried corpse, within the untrodden recesses of the forest."

"I shall never bring, or suffer harm to you or yours, Moina," he said; "and I will this night give you proof of it, at the risk of my life, if you will show me where I may meet your father and the men of his clan."

"What would you do, Alaster?"

"I would meet them singly in the confidence of the truce, which notwithstanding they have not sought; and I would speak to them as their comrade, and the friendly representative of the great Earl of Mar, my kinsman. Bring me to them, my pretty Moina, and I will sue even for friendship at thy father's hand, to second the love that is between thee and me."

"Ye shall ne'er say it again," she said blithely, "if ye will trust yourself to my guidance, for the hunters are not far to seek, although ye know it not. There's a corner of my plaid, Alaster, if ye're in earnest, and come with me."

Taking her arm, and wrapping round him the end of the plaid which she had so frankly offered, according to the fashion between lovers in the north, Alaster suffered himself to be led along beyond the brushwood, until they completely lost sight of the knoll behind which his men were posted. The path which Moina followed wound round a low hill above the narrow lake, but after proceeding some way, deserting it at an angle in the rocks, she entered a hollow way, or rather pass, which seemed to cut into the hill for some distance. After following for a space the windings of this gorge, suddenly the bank rose in a steep circle or bay in their front, and their further progress was to all appearance completely prevented. Alaster naturally stopped short when they came to the foot of the bank, and looked round into the face of his guide for an explanation.

"It's pleasant company and happy moments," he said smiling, "when young folks lose their way in the wood. But do not be ashamed, Moina; the dim moonlight scarcely can get in between these banks, so it is no wonder you should mistake your road; but our walk will be the longer—come back."

"Not so fast, Alaster. Think you the Gordons can lose their way in the Mar-forest? Hush! rest you here for an instant."

Taking the end of the plaid which was held by her lover, and throwing it again over her shoulder, she dipped into the shaded side of the ravine, mounted nimbly a few steps up the steep, by the side of a large tree, whose top barely rose over the bank above them, and spoke a few words in Gaelic to a head that seemed to be thrust out from the bank.

Descending again, she held out her hand, and said to Alaster, changing her tone, "Come, sir, mount, if that is your will."

He climbed up the steep by the aid of the trunk of the tree, when after a little, following his guide as she made an opening among the bushes, their ascent seemed to wind into the face of the hill, and at the mouth of the pass Alaster perceived the grim face of a Gordon observing him keenly from his sentinel station. The glare of firelight soon after struck upon his eyes, as he turned an elbow of the pass, and presently he perceived himself in an area of considerable extent within the hill, though the aperture above from which air and light came, was much narrowed at the top, and was surrounded by thick brambles and brushwood.

"Rest you here for another moment," she said, as they stopped, "I will go and be your announcer;" but suddenly checking herself with hesitating agitation, she added, "Heaven grant that my father may not misinterpret my boldness!"

She tripped away, however, and was soon lost by a turning of the rock. This strange place of concealment appeared, as Alaster could see it, to consist partly of a cave, and partly of rude erections of split trees, laid across a sort of paling which almost covered in the exterior part of the area, and within which burned several small fires. Round these Alaster could perceive, through the interstices of such rude walls, the ruddy faces of the wives and children of the deer-stalkers. A loud noise of tongues speaking in the high tone of wrath, within that part of the area which could not be seen from his present position, now arrested the attention of Alaster; he listened and heard his own name pronounced several times, in apparent fury, by a man, while the low and pleading tones of a woman's voice, evidently that of Moina Gordon, seemed endeavouring in vain to mollify the anger of the loud speaker. A moment's consideration showed Alaster the cause; when instantly stepping forth past the corner of the crag, and stooping as he entered an opening, within which a fire blazed in the midst of a sort of cave, he stood boldly in the presence of Grumach Gordon.

The group, assembled in eager discussion in front of the fire that burned in the inner recesses of the cavern, started on seeing Alaster; and several of them drew their broadswords half out of their scabbards as he stepped forward within the entrance. The veteran chieftain himself appeared in the centre, his head bare, and the red fire-light glaring with striking effect on his

weather-beaten features, as, excited by passion, he stood in an attitude calculated to inspire terror over the drooping feminine figure of Moina his daughter.

"What! is it so? hah!" was all that the old man was able to say in broken exclamations as the tall form of Alaster strode fearlessly forward.

"Do you draw your weapons to a simple messenger, gentlemen?" said the latter coolly, lifting his bonnet and bowing slightly, while his ruddy youthful features and curled raven hair, with his careless smile, as he thus stood exposed in the midst of his enemies, excited the involuntary admiration of all. "See you," he added, stretching out his unarmed hands, "I come as a friend."

"A friend!" repeated the leader of the deer-stalkers, with contemptuous wrath, "a spy! a spy, I say! and my daughter the abettor of the trick! But since you have a second time thrust your head into the lion's mouth, young man, glaumory and sorcery itself shall not deliver you. John of Leask, what stand you there for?" added the angry chieftain, pointing towards the entrance, which was instantly filled up by the scowling person addressed, and others of the reivers present.

"I have voluntarily put myself into your power," said Alaster, calmly looking round upon those who placed themselves behind him; "but I came with my own flag of truce, to bear a friendly message from myself in the name of the great John, Earl of Mar, under an assurance from this maiden that her father would take no advantage of my confidence."

"Dared you give such an assurance to my worst enemy?" exclaimed the chief, menacingly, to the terrified girl.

"He is not our enemy, father, I know he is not. For Heaven's sake, at least hear him!" cried Moina, again assuming her tone of entreaty.

"Although you and your people, sir," said Alaster, "have made the noble proprietor of this forest your enemy by your long-continued ravages upon the living produce of these wilds, and although he has sent me and my men to drive you thence with fire and sword, yet I would first entreat you, in the language of friendship and justice, to leave the Mar-forest in quietness without the spilling of blood; for strife and bloodshed bring many woes, and the wandering reivers of the hills, however ancient their lineage, who shoot the roe because the dumb beast has no protection but its light foot, cannot cope with the proud lord, whose castle sends forth a thousand archers."

"And is that thy proposal, sassenach-youth?" exclaimed the chieftain scornfully. "Go back, and tell the earl that the forests of Scotland afford food and shelter for the hungry foxes that find none but enemies in the smooth plains of the Lowlands, and also a bield for the birds of the air themselves, who, in spite of the cold blasts of the winter winds, do yet carol in their branching bushes under the sweet sun of summer: and while they do so, Highland shentlemen, whom the mischances of fortune have driven to the woods like badgers, shall never want a seething of venison in their pot while they can draw a bow. Here I have come, and the Earl of Mar knows it, and here will I abide over these brave men while it is my pleasure, and my broadsword can defend me."

"Are there not the forests of Athol and of Badenoch, of Glenmore and Abergeldy?" said Alaster anxiously, "and why should you harry only the game of Braemar? Retreat, Grumach Gordon, I beseech you! at least for a time I would not be thy enemy."

"Retreat! the Gordons retreat! and before thee! May the great God bring a curse upon——"

"Oh father, invoke not a curse upon us!" interrupted Moina. "Are we not already under the ban of heaven, obliged to hide ourselves like for-driven thieves in the caves of the wood?"

"And from whom? from whom? is it not from him there?" continued the old man with renewed rage, "from him whose sorceries have still delivered him out of the fang of my vengeance; from him who disarmed me before my own door!" and he gnashed his teeth at the thought, "but vengeance I will have still. Go, sassenach, and take my deep defiance with you. Grumach Gordon shall retreat before no man!"

In vain did Moina entreat, or Alaster argue. Obstinate hostility and deadly revenge, still deepening and more heartily resolved, amazed the understanding and saddened the hearts of the unsuccessful pleaders; but when the anxious maiden heard her father swear in his wrath that he would one day have the life of him who had conquered him in the presence of his own family,

and forced him from his warm covey in Glenskiach to take refuge here among the rocks in the wood, she prayed audibly with tears in her eyes that Heaven itself would interpose to protect from her father's rash anger the stranger who now stood an ineffectual peace-maker in the midst of the group.

Instead of being mollified by the piety, or moved by the tears and beauty of his daughter, the old man, standing forth in the centre, held up his clenched hand, and repeated with a hoarse voice, and all the solemnity of vengeful passion, his bloody oath.

"It will be a woeful day for your own grey hairs, old man," said the youth, with another species of solemnity, "when that ungodly vow shall be fulfilled! a day of woe it will be."

"A day of woe it will be," repeated a shrill and tremulous voice from the inner crevices of the cave, and the palsied head of a very old woman, who now sat up from a rude couch behind the group, seemed for the first time to be giving eager attention to the scene.

"Oh! do not say so, dear grandmother," exclaimed Moina, in a tone of apprehensive agony, as she knelt beside the old woman.

The latter only shook her head sadly, as she contemplated the youthful features of her deceased daughter's child, and laid her head quietly back on the couch.

"Holy Heavens! I am under the powers of witchcraft!" exclaimed the chieftain wildly.

Alaster now turned to leave the cave, but his exit was sullenly opposed by John of Leask and the others, who stood between him and the entrance. An altercation, amounting almost to an uproar, now arose as to his being allowed to leave the retreat of the Gordons thus easily, with full power, as they averred, of making use of the knowledge thus cunningly obtained, through the simplicity of a thoughtless maiden, to come upon them in their stronghold, and perhaps to drive them hence, as he had obliged them to flee from Glenskiach. In vain he protested, that having taken no note as he came, in the obscure moonlight, of his way, he could not again find out the spot, and proposed to depart in any manner they should prescribe, whereby he might be rendered unable to make use of his local information. The darkest looks were exchanged between the infuriated Highlanders, and the darkest hints communicated as to the safest policy, of which the power they had gave them now the alternative. But when, in answer to his appeal as to the friendly manner in which he had thrown himself upon them in the character of a messenger, some one proposed that he should be blindfolded, and thus led out into a distant part of the forest, Alaster drew his long claymore, and retreating to an inner part of the cavern, seemed determined to sell his life at the dearest rate, rather than submit to such an indignity.

The hunters now grouped together near the entrance in contentious, but whispering consultation, while Moina addressed a few words of anxious entreaty to Alaster, between whom and her father she went and returned several times. At length woman prevailed, and the brave representative of the noble house of Mar consented to suffer his eyes to be bandaged so soon as he was brought outside of the bank where he had first mounted behind the tree; the only condition appended to this arrangement being, that his conductor should be a mere boy, and unarmed, and that he should not be taken, in his hooded state, more than ten minutes' walk from the place where the bandage should be put on.

CHAPTER VI.

There was something in the situation of Alaster Graham, as he suffered himself to be led blindfolded through the narrow ravine or glen, up a diverging ascent, and over the surrounding broken and heathy ground, after he left the strong-hold of the deer-stalkers, that was painfully novel and not without a sense of degradation. Mingled with this, there were both sadness and anxiety. Sadness, mixed with feelings of delight, from certain speaking looks at parting, and the trembling pressure of a soft hand, stealthily conveyed into his, by Moina Gordon; and anxiety, always the effect of the spreading forth of the social affections, and the discovery of new channels of promised felicity. Musing over various matters of the present and the anticipated, Alaster forgot his ten minutes' engagement, while proceeding onwards even blindfolded as he was, and the cunning urchin who led him along seemed in no haste to apprise him of the lapse of time.

"Where, in the name of St Andrew, are you taking me, boy?" he at length exclaimed,

stopping suddenly, after nearly breaking his shins on a stone in the uneven ground over which he was travelling.

"Hersel may take aff the brecham frae her een noo, I'm thinking," said the boy, archly.

Removing the bandage, Alaster, upon looking round, found himself in the thick of the forest again, and on turning himself towards the part that was most open, what of the country he could see by the dim light of the quarter-moon was totally unknown to him.

"My good youth," he said to the boy, "as you have been the blind man's dog to me thus far, will you just tell me on which side of me to turn, that I may soonest reach the little loch that lies in the hollow somewhere in this neighbourhood?"

"If her nainsel's honour and clory," said the boy, with a grin, "turns her lug to the lown o' the brae, she'll maybe hear the tramp o' her ain feet the better; an' if she turns her nose to the way the wind comes, she'll maybe find the smell o' her ain peat-reek;" and with this impertinent reply, the giggling little villain made off to the left, and instantly darting behind the bushes, left our hero alone, and in no small perplexity.

"This is to be another night-wandering adventure in this wilderness, I see," said Alaster to himself, as he deliberated a few moments where he stood, then making his way towards the openest part, he strained his eyes to endeavour to decide, by the appearance of the country before him, which course to pursue. But though aware that the boy, as instructed, must have led him into a part of the forest as perplexing as possible in relation to the locality from which he had just been conveyed, he hoped, by ascending the nearest height, to discover some slight glare of light in the surrounding wild, to lead him to where his own fire burned under the knoll on which his men were posted.

The height that he ascended for this purpose, however, was so thickly covered with wood, and so broken and rugged, that he was soon obliged to descend where there was clearer footing; but as yet he could make out no trace of the small loch which he sought, nor of any fire appearing throughout the dim peeps of opening in the straggling forest. As he continued to descend, he found the light becoming more and more obscure, and looking up, perceived that the moon was already down, and thick darkness was fast gathering round him. He now began to get somewhat timorous and to feel fatigue, as his footing became more and more uncertain, and, as involuntary fancies regarding deep lochs, pitfalls, and precipices, successively crossed his imagination.

"It matters little; I can sleep till morning here as well as among my own men," he said, as he threw himself down on the rustling heath, but at the moment, the space before him being somewhat open and level, he thought he had perceived a faint light. He looked earnestly, and was sure he observed a light like that of a fire, yet so dim was it that he could only see it at all by looking for some moments steadily in one direction. Its very dimness, however, he thought, proved its reality, for, had it been an *ignis fatuus*, the phosphoric fire of the bogs, it would have been ten times more brilliant and distinct. It might prove to be the faint gleam of his own fire by the knoll after all. He determined to rise and follow it, as it was apparently so near.

It was not however, until after nearly half an hour's further travelling over a species of ground that would have discouraged the heart of any but a mountaineer, that he reached a small Highland cottage or sheiling, which he now began to be certain must belong to some other portion of his enemies. Danger with him, however, was rather a recommendation than otherwise to any adventure, and stepping up boldly he knocked at the door of the cottage. It was opened by a middle-aged woman, to whom he briefly explained that he was a stranger who had lost his way in the forest.

While the good woman, with hospitable Highland civility, invited Alaster to enter, he had no sooner spoken in reply, than a voice within giving a preliminary "Eigh Oigh!" or two immediately after, out jumped from a sort of crib, or wooden bedstead in the wall, a half-dressed figure, who, throwing himself down on his knees, embraced firmly the legs of our hero, at the same time uttering something between a howl and a scream of joyful recognition.

"And are you really still in the land of the living, Farquhar?" said Alaster, raising gently his resuscitated servant. "By the word of a Duine-uasal, I ken'd ye were hard to kill; but, in sooth, drowning's a death that some need have small dread of, while there's a handful o'

hempseed to saw in the Lowlands. God save ye all here!" he added, turning round and saluting the other inmates of the cottage.

"Pless us the night an' pless us the morn," said the Highland woman, curtseying to Alaster; "but the strangers pe plenty the noo, an' the shentleman's pe ganging fast through the wood, to the wars an' rumours."

"Wars and rumours!" repeated Alaster, observing more in detail the square forms and brown visages of two stalwart Highlanders, who, dressed in the gaudy tartan of the Stewarts' clan, sat "beyond the reek" of the peat fire, that burned in the centre of the sheiling.

"The praw stranger 'll pe for the wars too, na doot," said the woman to one of the Highlanders as Alaster seated himself.

"To be surely, her nainsel's honour 'll pe for the wars," answered the man aloud, with Highland flattery. "Kens she ought about them, if a pody may speer?" he added, addressing Alaster.

"No," said our hero simply; "I've heard of the wars in the low countries certainly, but what have we who live here on the hills to do with king or covenanter? The king is now an Englishman, and knows nothing, or cares nothing, for the braid Highlands, or the proud clans of the Gael; and as for the covenanters, it's my notion they like a preaching better than a piobrachd ony day; I know of no wars worth the name."

"Her nainsel maun pe as deef as the grey crag o' Glencronaghen," said the Highlander, assuming a scornful superiority, "if she hasna heard the news. But may-be she'll pe a Campbell frae the wast, an' a seven-an'-twenty half cousin o' the great Earl o' Argyle, wi' his black scull-hoods, his skraighing sawm-singing, forbye his preaching grunt, pah! pewh!"

"I really don't know what you mean, friend," was Alaster's reply, slightly offended, yet speaking with all the good-nature of a man of real courage.

"Then her nainsel's honour and clory maun be just as ignoramus as a prute peast, for a' her braw biodag and her braid sporan," said the strange Highlander jeeringly, as he glanced at the silver ornamented dirk by Alaster's side, and the ample tasseled purse that hung before him, "for a' the glens are ringing frae Lochgoil in the wast,' to Johnny Groat's hoose at the world's end, wi' the blithe news o' the wars o' the gallant Montrose."

"If your news be true, it's at least not very politely communicated," said Alaster; "but truly, friend, I am so well disposed to a little civil warfare, that for your jeer I am quite ready to give you a taste of either biodag or claymore, long lance or sken-dhu, whenever your valiant braggartship shall choose, in fair daylight, come the morning."

"Pohoogh! oigh! hoot away, lad. Ye're a braw boy for the wars! an' my vera particular friend and lovier," shouted Morrouch M'Combich, standing up, "and I'll just beg your free pardon for my civil joke, an' there's my loof on't; for disna ae shentleman ken anither a' the worl' o'er? There," and he held out a hand of no Lilliputian dimensions, "just shake me by the fist if ye dare, as the muckle de'il said to the Lowlander."

Alaster, laughing at the odd humour of the fellow, could not refuse his proffered hand, and shaking it cordially, they sat down the closest of friends to discourse of "the wars and rumours;" which news, being a rarity in these remote quarters, presented a theme of the most exhilarating interest to the youthful ambition of our hero.

"It's a tamn'd shame an' aconscionable confusion!" exclaimed the animated Gaelic stranger, ambitious to show off the elegance of his English, while he eyed Alaster's person from head to foot, "for such a buirdly galliard as her nainsel's clory to be creeping about here like a moudiewort in the woods when there's claymores ringing far a-field; yet here she'll be herding wi' the red-deer in the forest o' Braemar like a cowardly hurcheon, while the great Montrose is marching to the battle, bagpipes playing, horses neighing, trumpets blawing,—up wi' the war cry! Tulach ard! cries the Mackenzie; Fraoch eilan! cries Macdonald; A dh' aindeoin eotheireadh! cries Clan Ranald.—Whoo hoop!"—and jumping up on the floor, and flourishing his short stick, the man seemed about to run to the charge in the faces of his startled auditors, who sat staring on him in good-natured admiration.

"Hoigh! poigh!" shouted the same fellow again, slapping Alaster's bare knee in the most irreverent manner, on observing the ruminating look of our hero—"What'll her honour's clory be musing aboot when she sites there in the neuk, like a contemplation?"

"Never mind me, friend, but go on with your news of the war."

"I ken brawly what' ll be in her honour's thoughts," continued the persevering Athol-man; "she'll hae some sweetheart in the wood, some leman lass that keeps her frae her sleep at night, and rins between hersel' an' her wits by day. Fy! feigh! a petticoat an' a tonnag, a blue ee an' a saft word, to keep a young fellow frae the wars,—when gude men are on the heather, an' the slogan is sounding frae Lorn to Lochaber. Piewgh! fiewgh!"

Although the enthusiasm of Morrouch M'Combich was somewhat too roistering and obstreperous for the quiet habits of our hero, he did not himself fail to catch a good portion of it during the remainder of the conversation; and even his invalid servant, Farquhar, half-drowned as he had been, and wounded, and still sore with bruises, began to caper on the floor, and to long exceedingly for a tilt at the psalm-singing men of the covenant. Though also the sheiling in which this chance assembly were convened belonged to the scattered clan of the Macrabines, also deer-stalkers of the wood, yet even when the name and quality of Alaster came to be known, the sacred law of hospitality kept all now met in friendship for the remainder of the night; for our hero soon concluded, that it was in vain to seek his own party until he should have the benefit of the light of a new day.

After, therefore, eating together the friendly bread and salt, besides partaking of the good woman's store of goat's-milk cheese, cold venison, and oaten bannocks—the whole seasoned with a tass of usquebaugh and a hearty pinch of Highland snuff by way of dessert (a delicate luxury procured at the refined town of Aberdeen), the whole gathering became drowsy from the day's fatigue, and addressing themselves to sleep where they sat, each man began to dose as the red embers of the turf-fire sank away into darkness, and deep quietness soon resumed her reign over the surrounding solitudes of Braemar.

CHAPTER VII.

The vindictive wrath of Grumach Gordon against his daughter, for having thoughtlessly introduced his enemy into the very strong hold of the clansmen, vented itself after the departure of Alaster in bitter and deep reproaches. But Moina, with the patient reverence of a daughter for a parent, even under the influence of passion or mistake, answered not again, but when her father's wrath began to cool, occasionally edged in a word of mild and explanatory remonstrance.

Grumach, however, had a strong spice of military craft, such as it was, as well as of suspicion in his character, naturally acquired during the marauding life which he had led for thirty years; and having laid his plans in consequence of the discovery of his retreat, and consulted over them with John of Lask, he took few hours' rest, and by the grey light of the morning his men had already descended the ravine under the hill, within which their women were left behind, and were cautiously marching in the hollow towards the small loch, or pool, before mentioned, being completely screened from the view of the sentinel stationed on the knoll, by the thick brushwood beyond which Alaster had been led the night previous.

Meanwhile the small company at the bothy had also roused itself at cock-crowing, and all were preparing for their departure.

"He's a teevil o' a troublesome body that," growled Morrouch M'Combich impatiently at Farquhar, as he waited on the adjustment of the various bandages and bucklings with which the legs and wings of that wounded Samaritan were encumbered, through the kind attention of the Macrabine women, on whom the crafty henchman had contrived to pass himself as a clansman from Lochaw, who had fallen in with a skirmishing party from the wars; "tamn her plaisters an' poluses, an' her pothecaries ointment! but deel be licked," he continued, as, looking askance, he next observed the invalid comforting his heart with a lump of the goodwife's oaten bannock, and a gulp of her aquavitæ. "Deel be in her maw, but she sets her sickness uncommonly; for it hasna got near to the vital parts o' her stomach yet. Lauchey, come awa."

The whole four were soon on their way as far as they knew it, at least they were tramping according to the direction of their host, through the soft heath of a stripe of moor, for they now found themselves on an open part of what was still called the forest. The high ground only was covered with the elm and Scotch pine-fir, whose dark prickly tops intercepted the

bright rays of the morning sun, which now began to peep pleasantly over the irregular summit of the Grampians. Alaster wondered that he could not as yet recognize the country, though he was certain that the small loch, the knoll, and his men, could not be far distant.

"And so her nainsel's honour an' pleasure has said her swear, that she shall hae a pook at the skirts an' a fleg at the flanks o' thae traitor whigs an' preachical covenant-men," said Morrouch M'Combich to Alaster, in his ordinary elegant English, as they went along almost at a Highland trot. "Pipers an' piobrachds? Dorlachs an' skene-occles! but this present would pe a sweet spot for a bit comhraig brulzie. Got pless us! put I wuss the wars were here just the noo. Deel hauds my haunds that I dinna draw my clymore, an' kill that limping body wi' the bandages afore my breakfast just for a practice."

"Put your fingers in your ain mouth, an' try your teeth on your ain thumb till the time comes, friend," said Farquhar, in answer; "I'll warrant ye'll get practice enough before Montrose an' his men cross the Frith of Forth, or beat Johnny Urie beyond the border."

"Hoolagh! What's that?" suddenly shouted the enthusiastic Athol-man.

"What! Oigh! heard ye the whistle an' a clatter of claymores too, as sure's death?" screamed his companion.

"Heugh! heugh!" again whooped Morrouch, running forward, "see ye there! rin, lads,—here's a maist pleasant tuasaid just anoth our nose. Got pless the wars an' the rumours! Rin, ye deevils. Lauchey, what are ye swithering at?"

"Whilk side will ye take in the stramash?" said his neighbour Highlander coolly, and drawing out his broadsword.

"Ony side it pleasures his honour here," said Morrouch, "teevill may care! haste ye, or the fight 'll be o'er, an' we'll no get a stroke struck!"

With this, all the four ran with speed to where they had heard the whistle, and then a shout, and now observed under the knoll, which the hip of the fir-covered height on their left now revealed, Alaster's men confusedly engaged with the deer-stalkers, who, having come upon them by surprise, from their superior knowledge of the locale, the former evidently fought at a disadvantage, and some of them already began to give way.

"Follow me, friends!—behind the knoll!" cried Alaster to his new acquaintances.

"It's tamn'd round about though," said the eager M'Combich.

"A Graham! a Graham!" shouted Alaster, after the Highland custom, as he and his friends joined the fray.

This seasonable reinforcement soon turned the fortune of this irregular contest, and Alaster's men, shouting in answer for joy of the well-timed return of their leader, at once drove back the Gordons beyond the recess in the knoll. The Highlanders, on both sides, were so well acquainted with their weapons, that only one man of the deer-stalkers was killed, and but few wounds had as yet been received, when, contrary to his wish, Alaster was sought out by, and soon found himself engaged hand to hand with Grumach himself. The reiver chief eyed his antagonist with intense fury when they met, his look plainly intimating his joy in the opportunity of revenging the affront of his former defeat. As they joined swords the attention of Alaster was momentarily arrested by a screaming cry emanating from among the fires on the hill behind his enemy, which overlooked the little holm where the fight had taken place, for, according to custom, some women and children of the reivers were witnesses of the fray; and he even imagined that he heard the shrick of Moina, as she saw him about to spill the blood of her father.

The effect of this discovery had nearly cost the youth his life, for the old chief pressed hard upon him, seeing him stand entirely on the defensive, and he had to retreat three or four paces to avoid the eager vengeance of the old man. Recovering in an instant after his presence of mind, however, his strength and courage once more came fully to his aid; and succeeding by the superior vigour of his arm in turning aside his adversary's sword, he sprang in upon him, and wresting the weapon out of his hand, the old man fell with the shock, and lay a second time at Alaster's feet, panting for breath, and in dumb astonishment at so unusual an occurrence.

By this time the other clansmen had fled on all sides, being hard pressed, in particular by Morrouch M'Combich, whose enthusiastic valour, in spite of a slight wound in the face, was *quite disappointed* at the shortness of so agreeable an exercise as this fray afforded him "just

or practice." The whole of the Gordons, except two, and their leader, had found refuge among the irregular rocks which faced the woody hills on which the women were placed; and now Farquhar, by his master's orders, proceeded with alacrity to bind behind them the hands, not only of the two common prisoners, but those of the veteran chieftain himself. The great object of his expedition being thus happily accomplished, in a way to leave the ultimate determination of the fate of the leader of the deer-stalkers to his noble employer, with whom Alaster could easily intercede for his safety, putting his men in order, he was soon again on his march back towards the castle of Braemar.

CHAPTER VIII.

The morning sun, which seldom at this season had so early dispelled the mists that crowned the many heads of the great range of the Grampians, now began to peep in glowing brightness over the rugged heights to the east of Blair Athol, as Alaster and his men tramped cheerily on in their march through the forest. Keeping the higher ground, from which they had occasionally picturesque peeps, through among the trees, of the windings of the Dee, as here, comparatively in its infancy, the stream brawled beneath among rugged rocks, or swirled round and settled into linns and pools, though the broken tanglements of its irregular current; the Highland party next dived into the dark depths of the wood, in order the more speedily to get to the castle of Braemar.

Grumach Gordon and the other two prisoners, bound and disarmed, trudged on in the centre of the party in dogged silence, and with looks of dark and vindictive gloom. The two strangers, namely, Morrouch M'Combich and his companion, chose also to accompany Alaster to Braemar castle, as there they expected to meet with some gathering of the clans, who were likely to have by this time assembled to join the rising in the north under the gallant Montrose.

The further conversation of this redoubtable clansman, as, sticking close by the side of our hero while on the march, he continued to feed the fancy of the youth with glowing pictures of the pleasures of war, the glories of victory, and the prospects of plunder, was to the latter exceedingly exhilarating. Upon the matter of the spulzie to be obtained in the wars Murrouch dwelt with sincere gusto, especially when they should come to have the good fortune of gutting the houses of the rich burghers of Aberdeen or Dundee, or haply of the wealthy merchants of Glasgow in the west, who had all taken up the cause of the covenant with the most unaccountable wrong-headed wilfulness—evidently that, under Providence, the brave followers of Montrose might have no lack of booty when they should have left their bare hills to fight in so good a cause. This cause was no other than that of Royal Charlie himself, who, in addition, would shower upon them ultimately many honours and promotions; their perfect success under their gallant leader being a thing not to be spoken of with the slightest doubt.

While our hero and Morrouch, with sundry subsidiary listeners, were engaged in this gratifying discourse, emerging out from the thicket of the wood, and coming upon a heathy ridge, where the view of the hilly, picturesque country, from Braemar to Kildrummy, opened out on all sides, the ears of the party were refreshed by a distant strain of the bagpipe, which, far in the vale beneath them, came up at the moment with great effect from the sweeping entrances of the glen, and which, playing a wild martial piobrachd, touched the very souls of the errant Highlanders. Hastening to the top of the ridge, they observed the blue bonnets, dark tartan jackets, and short feile-begs of a considerable body of men, who, carrying the standard of the Stewarts of Appin, and armed only with target and claymore, dirk and skene-dhu, after the ancient fashion, were winding along the hollow with evident pride and picturesque regularity.

"Lamh Dhia Sinn! Oh, clory an' praise, see ye that?" cried Morrouch in an ecstacy—"Deevil almighty! what a creat army!—a hunder a thousand gallant shentlemans frae the braes o' Appin, marching, like a Bannockburn, to the great wars an' the rumours! Hoigh! Got tamn!—rin, lads, an see the clory!"

In short, the effect of this animating sight, not only upon the enthusiastic Morrouch M'Combich, but upon Alaster himself and the whole of the party, aware as they were of the destination of so gallant a gathering, is scarcely to be described. But when, as the party came more fully into view, another piper joined the former, and each, in all the pride of his

profession, blew into the drones of the instrument, while his cheeks were almost split with the exertion, and the skirl of their warlike music echoed up and along the glen, until the very walls of old Kildrummy seemed to send back the sound, Morrouch could stand it no longer, but drawing his claymore, and flourishing it round his head, he danced and capered, and "whoogh'd," and whooped, in his enthusiasm, until Alaster's whole party catching the infection, as they came to the brow of the height, set up one simultaneous halloo, waving their bonnets in acclamation to the gathering in the glen. Even the prisoners, and old Grumach himself, joined in the shout; and when the clan in the hollow, thinking that this was another legion collected in the same cause, answered with all the enthusiasm of the Gael this spontaneous slogan of the coming war,—the sound of so many human voices in the wilderness, joining in the simultaneous hurra! as it echoed away in the wild passes towards the mountains, had an effect that was positively sublime.

"Oigh! Got be a glory, Laughey! did ye ever hear such a beautification?" exclaimed Morrouch in a rapture to his neighbour. "Draw your sword, ye deevil, for the honour o' Montrose, an' look like a sodger marching to the pleasurement o' the wars. Hoigh! tamn her!"

Turning the angle of the ridge soon after the dark turrets of Braemar castle next came into view, rising tall and warlike beyond the windings of the Dee; and by the time Alaster and his men rounded the heavy hill which rises close behind it, various other parties of the Gael from different districts in the neighbourhood began to show themselves successively to the delighted spectators, as, with picturesque effect, they issued from the different passes in the glens, or poured down the green sides of the surrounding hills. Drawing near in tolerable order, the strains of their different bagpipes, mingling in wild and exciting discordance, as the sounds echoed from the distance, had, to the enthusiastic Highlanders, a peculiarly stirring if not striking effect.

A proud youth had Alaster Graham been all day while proceeding through the woods at the head of his own small company; but as all greatness is comparative, his shrunk almost into nothing in his own estimation, as, coming in with his few followers, he witnessed the pride of the Gaelic chieftains marching at the head of their compact legions of wild clansmen. Never had he seen so animating a sight as he now witnessed in the strath of Braemar.

Even the castle itself, which still stands upon a slight rising ground within a few hundred yards of the Dee, and is merely a tall, black, and somewhat triangular building, with its pepper-box turrets toppling from the corners beneath the chimneys, and an antique round tower with a screw stair-case shooting up in the inner angle, where one part of the building appears awkwardly stuck against the other, seemed to look down with a natural Highland pride upon the brave array, who now made the scene so stirring all round it.

Alaster, on his arrival, could scarcely make his way through the crowd which surrounded the earl; and his own importance was sadly damped, as, on announcing his return, and naming his prisoners, he received a hasty command to see them attended to a place of security, and to wait until the earl should have leisure to give his attention to this matter.

Meantime the usual preparation for the hospitable entertainment of the chieftains and people, caused great bustle among the numerous underlings of the castle; and as every kind of gathering forms an excuse for getting up that glorious species of mountaineer enjoyment, a Highland feast, nothing was now omitted that use and wont had made sacred to a cheerful parting banquet, before the clans, now assembling at Braemar, took their departure to join the brave Montrose. Several oxen, sheep, red deer, and kids, the servants were roasting whole for the use of the guests, and more than one great pot-full of poultry and game were already stewing in the kitchens, and at the rear of the castle. A great fire was kindled on the lawn, round the gnarled trunk of an old oak, according to ancient custom, which oak was appropriately called the trunk of the feast, and at this fire the largest beeves were roasting on wooden stakes, and now sent forth a peculiarly tempting savour. Within the best apartment of the castle two tables were covered for the earl and his principal guests, while his common retainers without lent handy assistance to the servants employed on the green, in setting up such temporary erections for the accommodation of the inferior clansmen as the occasion admitted of.

While all were occupied in different ways, Alaster was, with his prisoners, hastily summoned into the presence of the Earl of Mar. In an upper chamber of the castle, a plain square apartment, sat his lordship, surrounded by a close group of Gaelic chiefs, mixed with his own

retainers, whose warlike appearance and stern nobleness of mien, as they eyed our youth and his men, formed a scene that was strikingly, though unpretendingly imposing. Its effect was greatly heightened by the presence of old Grumach Gordon, who, slightly bound, bare-headed, and disarmed, and with a look more of defiance than humility, strode boldly up toward the centre of the group.

"Bring you me a single prisoner, young man?" said the earl, sternly.

"Yes, my lord, with only two others; but I bring you Grumach the reiver himself."

"And could he not have been disposed of without being led like a tethered bull into our own presence? Is there not a donjon beneath the level of the sward that surrounds this castle, which might be fit lodging for this audacious despoiler? But you seem to have a request to prefer. If so, speak it."

"It is, that Grumach Gordon may be set at liberty. Nay, start not, my lord," said Alaster, "he is willing to join the brave Montrose in the wars, and to take with him the whole Gordons and Macrabins of Glenskiach."

"Alaster, you are but a young man," replied the earl, eyeing the youth with a meaning look; "claymores have been drawn, and blood has been spilt in the wood, and yet you have brought me this old man's crafty head upon his own shoulders. I like not this impolitic humanity."

"Dhia gledh sinn!" exclaimed the prisoner, losing all restraint on his tongue, "is my two ears to hear this spoken to an unfortunate chieftain of the ancient clan of the Gordons? Gentlemen, Stewarts and Macdonalds," he continued, addressing himself to the assembled chiefs, "will you stand there and see a duinewasal and a Gordon treated thus? Will you coolly allow an old man to be beholden to and reproached with the cruel humanity of a boy?"

The chiefs crowded round and spoke apart to the earl, who, after further questioning with Alaster, said aloud——

"Old man, upon condition of your departing with these gallant chieftains to join the noble Montrose, you are free."

The old man bowed his grey head in token of assent.

"Gille-coise," added the earl to his henchman, "let not a Gordon remain longer in bonds in my presence, and let them partake of the festivities which none shall be denied who are within my walls this day."

With evident feelings of remaining vindictiveness and wounded pride, the old man was conducted from the presence of the earl, with whom Alaster, however, remained, and being introduced to the chiefs, was very soon also appointed to a command under one of them in the army destined to join the forces of Montrose.

As the day advanced the feast was set in the manner which has so often been described; with the usual rude but imposing magnificence in the hall, and clumsy plenty on the green, in front of the castle. Within, the earl presided in all the glory of feudal state, the pipers playing, during the whole time of the repast, exhilarating strains of warlike music, which, however deafening to modern ears, certainly took nothing from the keenness of the appetites of the ravenous Highlanders. In the evening, when the wine and whiskey began to take effect, the chiefs and lairds, beginning to snap their fingers and thump the table to the lively strains of their pipers, could keep no longer on their seats, and a dance, the usual sequel of such good cheer, was from right to left called for; until the word being carried to the green without, numbers of men and women incontinently rushed into the hall, and in five minutes' time one of the great tables was completely cleared away, its seats were moved to the walls, and lairds and ladies prepared for the dance.

CHAPTER IX.

The dames of all the household at Braemar castle, as well as all who lived near, knowing the humour and manner of a Highland feast, and that all festive gatherings in their glens must end either with a dance or a fight, if not with both, had dressed themselves in their best in readiness for the merry exercise; and the show of healthy beauty that now graced the hall, filled the oldest of the men present with that pleasure and pride which such a sight, in the moment of exhilaration, is calculated to produce upon the warm-hearted inhabitants of the cold mountains

of the north. Some parley, however, took place before the dance began, while the ladies of the earl's household were led into the hall; and as Alaster stood up with other youths, and looked at the rosy countenances of the Highland damsels, seeking to find a partner, he caught a glimpse of a half-concealed face in the rear of the throng, that sent the blood more quickly from his heart. He scarcely could believe his eyes, yet the impression upon himself convinced him he had made no mistake. Pushing his way through among the others, towards the more obscure part of the hall near the entrance, he soon found the interesting object that had attracted him, and in short, before he was able to speak from surprise, he had pressed the hand, frankly put into his, of his little enthusiastic maiden of the forest, Moina Gordon.

"I have followed my father," she said, "all the way hither to Braemar, and you, Alaster, have procured his freedom. I must thank you, although he does not."

"God bless thy fair looks, my pretty Moina," he said caressingly, as they stood behind backs, "but come, I want thee—hark!"

"Who leads off the dance?" the Earl of Mar called out good-humouredly, as Alaster was speaking, at the same time rising from his seat at the top of the hall.

Several of the chiefs and ladies now crowded round him. "No!" he added aloud, in answer to the suggestion of one of them, "there shall be no distinction of ranks in this night's Ceum-siubhail. The chief shall foot it with the damsel of the sheiling, and the proudest lady in Braemar castle shall not refuse to beck to the bow of the bonneted lad, who has a light heel and quick ear for reel or strathspey. Come! where is Alaster Graham, my handsome forester? Alaster!" he continued, as the latter came forward, "you shall begin the dance; choose you a partner first, and not the proudest dame here shall refuse your challenge."

The few Highland dames present stood round, admiring the youth, as he bowed in answer to the speech of the earl, each expecting to have the triumph of being selected for his partner; but he, passing the whole of them by, and stepping to the lower end of the hall, brought from among the crowd of lowly damsels a modest figure of simple beauty, in the slender person of Moina Gordon.

Manifesting much reluctance to come forward thus publicly, Moina struggled for a moment with her lover, for Alaster had employed some gallant freedom in urging her to lead the dance, and to proceed with him towards the centre of the hall; when, as all eyes were now directed to her, the brooch which fastened her plaid or sagum of striped stuff, gave way, and the garment falling on his arm, exposed her person to the view of all.

The close dress which enclosed the bust of the blushing girl was actually of silk, and the dark-green tartan of the clan of the Gordons being the ancient Carac-chalamh, or jupe of the Lowlands, was made nearly like the spencer of later times, but terminated in a picturesque bodice of red stuff, very much in the style of those worn by the Swiss girls at this day. A short petticoat of light blue mankey, with laced sandals of tanned deer-skin on her feet, and stockings of red and white dicering on her legs, composed the dress of the lower part of her person; and her thick fair hair, bound with a sprig of a bright species of myrtle, all showed, that, seated by the banks of some clear pool, before she came to the castle, the Highland maiden had taken no small pains with her toilet, with a natural view to the admiration of him whom she had followed thus far.

A titter of female curiosity and a toss of the head among the dames at the upper end of the hall, was the consequence of Alaster's choice, but soon, as the floor was filled, the call of the earl to his pipers, with their exhilarating preludes as they puffed and tuned their instruments, adjusting the branching drones over their shoulders with all the consequence of their important vocation, added not a little to the general festive excitement.

"Play up 'The Graham's Gathering at the lucky rock in Strathspey,' or no, let it be '*Thogail nam bo*—for the Mac Farlanes," cried the earl, "'We come through the drift to drive the prey,'" he added, translating into English that popular air—"that is most appropriate to the morrow's duties. Play, lads! play! the piobrachd, first at least, for a prelude to the lighter music."

As the dance afterwards went on, and was deeply enjoyed by the animated youngsters, Grumach Gordon slipped in from among the crowd without, his old heart kindling with all the enthusiasm of youth at the sound of the Strathspey and the sight of the company; when watching the gleeful agility of the dancers, he perceived among the very foremost his constant conqueror,

Alaster Graham. But what was his astonishment, when, on looking further, he saw that youth handing round and setting, in the greatest familiarity as his partner, with his own daughter, Moina Gordon. Placing himself on a bench behind the company, the old man sat gazing under his grey bushy eyebrows at the happy pair, while various passions contended in his mind; involuntary admiration for so handsome a couple, which he could not repress, was mixed with dark and vengeful wrath, still burning against the youth, and a confusion of plans for the punishment of his thoughtless and wilful daughter.

The lovers, however, enjoyed themselves unconsciously the whole evening, and danced together the threesome reel, and the quartette Strathspey, the lightsome Highland hornpipe of the Shan-trius; and footed, with their respective Gaelic names, and in the true Gaelic style, the forward step and the setting step, the tripping cross-springs and the graceful cuartage or turning step, in a manner surpassing all others of the best mountaineer dancers present. The scowling ire of old Grumach himself began to be lost in his parental pride and extorted admiration; and when the earl and Glen-leg of Athol took a turn round the hall, attracted from their seats by their sympathy with the evident enjoyment of the dancers, the old man came forth from his obscure recess, and threw himself in the way of hearing their conversation.

"By my faith, a likely couple!" exclaimed the earl, as he contemplated the two, now left almost alone in the middle of the hall; "who can this tasteful little maiden be, whom I have admired all night? for she is neither dighted and dizened like the stately dames of Braemar, nor is she at all like the humble nigheans of the glens."

"What think your lordship, if she be the daughter of the veteran forest-reiver of Glenskiach? Nay, I am certain of it," answered the Laird of Glen-leg, "for I observed them talking together as father and daughter may talk, and the maiden's apparel befits the notions of the old man, who still, even though hiding in the dens of the forest, calls himself a chief of the old Gordons of Morven."

"Ha! is that the case?" cried the earl; "now I see the meaning of the galliard's lenity to the wild deer-stalkers, and his anxious pleading for this audacious old man. By my sooth, there is not a buck that tosses his branching antlers in the woods of Athol but this youth would give to the pot of the hunters, for one soft word of the reiver's young fawn. See how they smile upon each other, and twist and twine together in the dannsadh. But I will raise an obstacle between them as high and as hard to get over as the black rock of Aviernoch. It must not be that the slightest sprinkling of the blood of Braemar shall ever join the contaminate current that flows in the veins of the reiver broken-men of my own forest."

"She never shall! never shall!" exclaimed a hoarse voice from behind, and in a tone that sounded through the hall above even the loud notes of the bagpipes. In another instant the aged cearnach presented himself in an attitude of dogged pride facing the earl.

"No!" he repeated, "I say no! never shall the ancient blood of my people mix with the base blood of a mongrel bastard, even though he be a bye-blow of the proud house of Mar! Nay, start not, haughty earl. I have said it! I am a ruined man, and your prisoner mayhap, but my name is Grumach Gordon!"

The earl turned his astonished look from the old man, and cast it with stern scorn towards the chief beside him.

"Cur of a wood-thief, speakest thou thus to the Earl of Mar's face?" exclaimed Glen-leg, and instantly grasping the plaid of old Gordon with his left hand, as he drew his long biodag with the other, he seemed about to stab the reiver on the spot.

"Bastard! sayest thou, old man?" next cried Alaster, also bursting in among the crowd that grouped around, the dance being now completely interrupted; "your pardon, chieftain," he added, putting up the arm of Glen-leg, "it is I that ought to have the privilege of avenging the insult to myself and the earl. I have twice saved the life of this ungrateful cearnach, but it is now forfeited. Bastard! ha!" and drawing his dirk, while he grasped the reiver's throat, he held the weapon gleaming over his head.

His uplifted arm was again prevented by the bye-standers, for the whole festivity, as was by no means unusual in the Highlands, had turned in an instant into a scene of terrible uproar, there being Gordons present, besides those that rushed into the hall on hearing of the quarrel, and there were M'Donalds, and M'Leans, and Grahams, and Stewarts. And now a wild Babel of loud Gaelic tongues sounded through the apartment. In another moment claymores

and skene-dhus gleamed in the grasp of several uplifted hands; the lights plucked from the walls and carried towards the crowd in the centre, served to show the glances of scorn or defiance that were thrown from many a swarthy countenance.

"Pieugh! Hieugh! Teevil almighty tamn her soul!" cried a well-known voice, somewhat profanely, as flourishing high his drawn claymore, and bursting into the middle of the crowd, Morrouch M'Combich became obstreperously conspicuous. "Cot tamn! will her nainsel's clory thrapple the auld man that marched wi' us through the wood, and will shentlemans stand by an' stick ane anither in the cuts in the laird's ha', when we're a' gaun to the pleasurements o' the wars an' rumours? Oigh!"

"Who is this savage?" said the earl to Glen-leg, his attention for the moment being completely diverted from the main fray by the odd manner of the intruder.

"Her nainsel be a shentleman!"—affirmed Morrouch, briskly answering for himself as he again brandished his claymore. "Cot be neist us! will your lordship's clory let the puir deer-stalker pody be worried like an auld tupe in him's nain castle! when shentlemens are marching like pleasant lambs to the clorification o' the wars o' Montrose?—Oigh! Pieugh! let go her craig!—" he shouted to Alaster, "or faith she'll split her wezon wi' her ain skenedhu, tamn her!"

This ludicrous, yet characteristic speech, had a wonderful power over all present, at least it gave the fierce spirits of the Highlanders a moment for thought, a great advantage gained over those who are just about slaying each other; but while Alaster and the reiver stood respectively eyeing one another in their wrath, the attention of all was attracted by a third object. In short, close as the crowd in the hall which had swelled with the rising quarrel was, Highland gallantry, on the outside of the circle within which the earl stood, was displayed in readily giving way to facilitate the entreated introduction of Moina Gordon.

The electrical effect of the first words, and even of the simple presence of the Highland maiden, as she now stood like the angel of peace in the centre of the excited crowd, can only be conceived by those who have witnessed the power of woman over the rugged spirits of men. The very sound of her soft feminine voice, as, in the affecting tone of entreaty, and using the poetic phraseology of her native Gaelic, she begged for peace on all sides, and especially for protection to her father, was followed by a spontaneous murmur of assent and admiration.

"Forgive, my lord," she said at length, kneeling at the feet of the earl, "excuse and forgive the hasty words of an ancient clansman, who, though forced by oppression to make for himself a den in the forest, like the hunted prey of the strong, and to seek a living like the fowls of the air, who build their nests unbidden in the green boughs of Braemar woods, cannot forget that he once held broad lands in the craggy isles of the west, or that proud blood flows in his veins. And oh! if it please your lordship's honour, do not let this youth and he swear this bitter vengeance,—for in the wars of the Lowlands to which they are going, heads enow will be laid low in the dust, though the brave sons of the mountains draw not their swords to sheath them in each other's bosoms."

"Rise, maiden," said the earl to her, in the most kindly tone. "There is more good sense in thy simple words than all of us together have now manifested, and a music in thy voice that well may move men from the most ruthless purposes. For thy sake, damsel, I will myself unsay my hasty words, for truly, though thou hast a rough and ill-mannered father, it were small disgrace, I think, to the proudest blood in my hall to be joined to such a gentle spirit as thine."

"And forgive, too, my angry threats, my lord," said Alaster, also bending on his knee, "for though the language of the vindictive reiver, whom I have brought from the forest, is hard to bear, yet for this maiden's sake I am most willing to forget and forgive."

"Old man, see you that sight?" cried the earl, pointing to the kneeling pair, "shall I bless them both before you go to the wars, and promise them happy days together, and happier nights when he returns from the Lowlands with victory and honours?—Say it, sullen carle!"

"No!" shouted the old man, his sharp voice sounding through the silent hall like the angry croak of a demon. "No! Earl of Mar. I shall never say it! Though the maiden is my own daughter, and the pride of my heart, I would sooner lay her head in the kirk-yard of Crathy than I would give her to the arms of the man who has brandished his weapon over me as my conqueror; no, Lord of Mar, there has blood been between us, and more is yet to

flow. The steel is cold that divides us, and its fiery gleam only can bring heat again. Nay, frown not, lairds and chiefs, I am a Gordon, and my lost honour must be retrieved by blood, red blood! On the heath it must be spilt! I have seen it in my sleep, my dreams are sanguine with it, the spirit of vengeance hath spoken it. The day of feud is to come, even if it should be to me and mine a day of bitterness and of woe."

The whole company were startled into a superstitious awe by the wild energy of this speech, and in the silence which followed, the fearful word "woe," was either repeated by some voice from the further recesses of the hall, or at least it echoed ominously from the vaulted roof above them. Its immediate effect upon the excited senses of the Highland maiden drew the attention of all who stood round. Rising up with hands clasped together, her uplifted eyes seemed to express a strange sentiment, and shot from them lightning of intense mental distress, mixed evidently with the dark apprehensions of coming sorrow; when, shaking off the myrtle wreath that bound her yellow hair, and allowing it to fall over her neck and shoulders as she turned suddenly towards the astonished Alaster, she uttered something between a suppressed scream and a sob of sadness, and while the by-standers made way for her on each side, she flung her long locks hastily behind her, and rushed wildly out of the hall.

The crowd of men soon closed in, and a buzz of Gaelic voices, after the first silence, again rose round, for the seeds of some future feud seemed evidently to have been sown by the very example of a vengeful spirit set by the sullen deer-stalker. Whatever should be the end of the various controversies now raised among the guests in the castle, the evening festivity was completely disturbed, and during the confusion that prevailed Alaster stole out to give vent to his feelings, and, if possible, to obtain a parting word with Moina Gordon.

CHAPTER X.

The buzz of mirth and homely enjoyment without the castle of Braemar was much greater and infinitely farther extended than the more dignified and passionate controversies into which the pleasures of the evening had now turned within its walls. The great beacon of the feast was still burning brightly on the lawn, its gnarled trunk not being yet entirely consumed, and its red light shone with enlivening effect upon the weather-beaten countenances of the hardy mountaineers, who sat in groups around it, telling their tales of local creach or superstition, or drawing imaginative pictures of the coming war. Various other fires burn in different places, on the slopes where the Highlandmen had been entertained; groups were dancing to the bagpipe near the bonfires, whose red light was reflected in the still waters of the Dee beneath, and the hum of festive enjoyment and universal occupation throughout the valley, or up behind the castle, with the different sights and sounds which struck the several senses of the observer, had an effect of picturesque and romantic confusion.

The mind of Alaster began to recover its composure, and even to partake of the general hilarity, as he wandered through this animated scene. He knew, however, that it was not in the crowd or amongst the dancers that he need seek for his enthusiastic Highland maiden. Turning up, therefore, towards the rear of the castle, he wandered musingly along the side of a small burn which issued from a narrow opening in the braes above, and before he had proceeded a few steps Moina Gordon stood directly in his path. About to speak to her familiarly as before, Alaster was awed by the elevation of her manner, as, stepping two paces back, she prepared to address him.

"You have done me wrong, Alaster," she said in a tone of complaint, "you have done me much wrong, however unwittingly. It was not to exhibit myself with you in the halls of Braemar castle that I travelled through the forest after my captive father, and you know how reluctantly I was persuaded to be your partner in the dance, without time to ask leave of the chafed old man. But it is I who am to blame! Alas, that bitter imprecation! how it rings in my ears still! I must not hear you speak. I must not see you again. You have drawn your brand against my father to-night, in the face of your vow and your token; and his wild curse, in return, portends sadness and woe."

Alaster stood petrified by this striking summing up, and more by the elevation of manner with which it was delivered, unable for a few moments to offer a reply. "Your reproachful conclusion, Moina," he at length said, "follows an event which neither of us could have fore-

seen. It is not such as you who, being present on such a night as this, would have been allowed to keep aloof from the dance in the castle."

She only continued to look sadly in his face.

"Moina," he continued, "I had been no man could I have heard that hated word in silence. Yet, though I spoke in haste, I would not have touched a hair of your father's head. Will you not forgive me, Moina Gordon?" She put her hand hesitatingly into his.

"Moina," he said, evidently suppressing his rising pride, "powerful is the feeling in my bosom towards yourself, that causes me to bear as I have done with that vindictive old man. Unworthy is he, methinks, of such a daughter."

"Alaster," she said solemnly, "that is not language that I can listen to. But if you have any feeling towards me, ah! let me entreat that, for my sake, going as you both are to follow to the wars, when meeting together in the long march, or fighting side by side on the field of slaughter, you will still keep your vow towards my poor father."

"So help me, Heaven!—but only for your sake, Moina."

"There is much sadness mingled with the happiness of this night," was her plaintive reply, "and something weighs heavy on my spirits, and still rings in my ears, as if it were the dread echo of my father's curse."

But few words more were spoken on either side; the reconciliation between them did not seem quite perfect, yet the bright eyes of the Highland maiden had evidently lost no portion of their lustre, as Alaster gazed on them by the red light of the sinking fires, and their final farewell was as soft, yet a thousand times more affecting, than the last long note of the shepherd's pipe, which is often heard at eve by the eager listener as it sweeps down the wild glen in the solitudes of Inveronoch.

A dead silence and stillness soon spread over the hitherto busy scene on the slopes of Braemar, and reigned in the crowded stone-chambers of the castle, as the Gael of every degree refreshed themselves with a few hours' deep slumber to fit them for the morrow's long march. The mustering of the clans in the morning on the green lawn was exceedingly picturesque, though not quite so regular, on this occasion, as a review in Hyde-park is at the present day, nor was it without an amusing mixture of Highland swearing, clannish pride, clamour and enthusiasm. The women of the neighbourhood, and others who had followed the "braw lads" thus far, were particularly troublesome to the leaders and chiefs, diverting greatly the attention of the men from their public duty, as the seductive sex have ever been accused of doing.

Of all the men of war who on this interesting morning were distracted by cares of this sort, none was harder put to it than our valiant friend Morrough M'Combich, who, having on the previous night picked up a dancing acquaintance with a tall kimmer of the glen, who professed to have known him years before, (of which, however, the honest Highlander had no distinct recollection,) became so desperately loving towards the time of parting, that Morrough's patience could hardly endure it.

"Oigh—oigh!—pless her pody, forbye her sowl, Morrough," simpered the wily kimmer, as she stuck to the skirts of the Highland hero up and down—"an' so she's gaun to the great wars, an' the foes, an' the slaughter; an' may-be she'll ne'er come back to Braemar or Blair-Athol. Ochon, och aree! puir Morrough."

"Tuish, whisht! pless her sowl too," whispered Morrough hastily, "noo there's my thumb, an' so gang to the glen, for here's the cornels an' the machors an' the duineusals, an' the pipers are skirling on the trones—pieugh! let me gang, for we're aff this moment to the wars an' rumours."

"But what'll her nainsel pring me frae the Lowlans' when she comes pack frae the clory's o' the wars?" inquired the persevering kimmer, with true Highland greed. "She maun pring her a plaid o' silk an' a gown o' procade, forbye a gowpen o' goold to fling in her lap, an' a forpet o' silver, an' oo'h put she'll pe a praw ledy then," added the kimmer, spreading out her petticoats to illustrate her meaning, "walking like a carline afore her nain door."

"Oogh, aye," said Morrough, answering the unreasonable expectations of his joe with a "pleasurement" of Highland flattery; "she'll pe sure to pring her pags fu' o' goold an' mountains o' silver."

"An' a proach for her preast," rejoined the kimmer eagerly, "a shinkling proach, as praid as the moon, an' grand rings for her fingers, an' shining puckles for her shoes, an' a whorl o'

laumer peads for her neck. Oigh! put she'll pe a praw ledy then, when she's gaun afore Mass-John to pe marriet."

"Oogh, aye, to pe surely," said Morrough, soothingly. "Noo, just gang doon the glen, for there's the lairds an' the cornals."

"An' are ye gaun to the wars an' the Lowlans, an' may be she'll ne'er come pack ava. Hieugh! whee!"—and the kimmer set up a Highland howl, and let fall a shower of mercenary tears.

"Whisht! hieugh! tamn her sowl," growled Morrough, quite afflicted with the woman's noise, "will she skirl there! louder than Donald Dreigh's bagpipes? Hoot! haud her greet, Got tamn! an' gang hame, till an honest shentleman's march, wi' a peace an' a pleasurement to the clory o' the wars an' rumours."

The warlike skirl of the bagpipe, as Morrough irreverently, though somewhat truly, denominated the music of that melodious instrument, was now set up from so many quarters, that it was evident a general movement was about to take place, and the word being given from left to right, a coercive separation was effected between Morrough and his lady-love, to the great relief of the valiant hero, who forthwith prepared himself for the proud sublimities of a real march to the wars. The whoops and hieughs in giving the word of command to the few musketeers whom the laird of Glen-leg had been able to muster, as with great ostentation they were exercised under the adjutancy of a veteran Dalgetty of the day, would, along with the manner they were answered, be somewhat amusing could they be witnessed by the military elegantiarum of the Horse Guards of our time; but seemed quite astonishing and admirable to the general array of the Gael, who, trusting more to the broadsword than any other weapon, could hardly be persuaded even to handle the longbow and its arrows, which seemed cumbersome to carry across the hills, however well they might answer for bringing down the fox or the wild deer in the surrounding forests.

It was a gallant sight to the women and old people assembled in the neighbouring heights to witness this formidable squadron put in motion, though the whole, sub-divided under many petty but proud leaders, did not amount to a thousand Highlanders. The short, but loud word of command to the men, repeated in sequence by many consequential officers; with the succeeding bursts of bagpipe-music as the companies marched off, had a particularly pleasing and picturesque effect, answered as they were by the echoes from the hills; and now the whole moved towards the heights behind the castle, and were soon lost beyond their ridges or amongst the woods, while murmurs of grief at this last sight of their friends, and many blessings and prayers for safety, broke the stillness that again began to reign on the slopes of Braemar.

On a low knoll that skirted the forest sat Moina alone, and watched the small company of the Gordons, that was led by her father, and a larger body, at the head of which appeared the tall figure of Alaster Graham, as they successively descended beyond the ridge and were lost to her view, with feelings that we need not describe. When all was over, and the green valleys beneath were again without an inhabitant, rising, and joining a few of her people who waited at a distance, she proceeded silently back through the wood towards the deserted Clachan of Glenskiach.

CHAPTER XI.

The fate of two or three individuals, through a series of incidents, in which we have had opportunity of slightly touching upon the ancient manners of the Gael, being all we aim at in our simple story, no further allusion to the historical events of the period is made than is absolutely necessary to the tracing of the main catastrophe, for the truth of which we have at least the veritable testimony of tale-telling tradition.

It was after the welcome reinforcement received from Athol and Braemar, mentioned in the last chapter, that the Highland army who followed the fortunes of Montrose achieved in various parts of the north (before descending into the Lowlands of Fifeshire and Stirling) those brilliant, but unsatisfactory exploits which are so well known in Scottish history. But if the campaign was glorious to those who count such things a glory, it was fatiguing and harassing to a degree that none but hardy mountaineers could have endured, and none but

those who are acquainted with the nature of their rugged country can understand or appreciate. The victories of Inverlochy, of Alderne, and of Alford, the herrying of Argyleshire, and the sacking of Dundee, could scarcely make up for the terrible toils encountered in climbing the bleak precipices of the west, in wading through drifts of snow among the mountains during the depths of winter, where the poor Highlanders were often scarcely able to see the tops of each other's bonnets, or in starving for days together, while manœuvring and retreating to avoid Baillie and Urry, on the barren braes of Badenoch. These scenes, and the incidents to which they gave rise, will long be remembered in interesting tradition, and continue to be sung in Scottish song; but it was a memorable revenge that Argyle took for the hasty herrying of his country by plundering the estates of another aged earl; and while the picturesque ruins that mark the spot where these transactions took place are mouldering into decay, the wild and melancholy music of these glens will long commemorate the lamentable burning of 'The bonny house of Airlie.' But to return to our tale.

Months had passed away, and the fitful rumour of the distant war had come in snatches of contradictory exaggeration and episodes of sad personal history to the anxious ears of the few women and others still remaining in the deserted baille of Glenshiach, within the forest. But the battle of Inverlochy, fought comparatively in their own neighbourhood, brought consequences which the simple females of the wood could not have foreseen, and which carried sad anxiety at least to one interesting bosom. Some there were who had returned to the forest from the war without glory, and with hearts burning with envy and disappointment; and vows were heard by the solitary Highland maiden, uttered in fancied secrecy, and over dirks touched with blood, which horrified her simple feeling, and caused her ultimately to form resolves, such as love only could dictate, and noble enthusiasm only could undertake. In a short time after this, Montrose's army, with his Irish allies, again advanced from the north, on their march towards the Lowlands, and a second and more fatal scattering again took place of those who had hitherto dwelt within the woody solitudes of Braemar.

It was already the afternoon of a clear sunny day in spring, when a single youth, footing his way over the Highland hills towards Montrose's camp, on attaining a height on the eastern ridge of the wild mountains of Cairn Gorm, first obtained a distant view of the much-desired object of his solitary march. Pleasantly to the glowing fancy of the youth lay the white tents of the army, along the side of a stream in the green strath beneath him; and warlike did the whole array appear, however irregular in its fortified disposal, when, as he descended the hills, he could distinguish the red standard of Scotland's lion fluttering over Montrose's tent, and above the principal points of the encampment. A small but much valued squadron of horse, which the care-worn leader of this ill-to-manage host had still been able to preserve attached to himself, were exercising with picturesque effect on the slope in front of the camp, and an irregular mass of sutler followers and their baggage hovered in a dense body among the cottages and in the woodland immediately in its rear. Picquets and scattered sentinels of the Gael guarded the exterior passes towards the stream, and this being a spot where Montrose allowed his wearied troops a few days of repose, a bustle of careless merriment seemed over the camp, and various groups of idling Highlanders lay basking on a bank in the afternoon's sun.

The heart of the stripling beat quick with pleasure as he surveyed all these stirring features of the war, of which he had often heard among the inland glens of Aberdeenshire, out of which he was now emerging almost for the first time. But as he looked abroad over the tents, his mind was occupied with emotions regarding some who he knew were there unconscious of his approach, that filled him with a multitude of mixed anxieties. What these anxieties consisted of, will appear in the sequel; but as the youth had still a considerable space of hilly land to travel over before he could reach the camp, we will transfer our attention for a little to some of those engaged for the day on duty under Montrose, at a point which this young stranger was likely to pass.

Our old friend, Morrough M'Combich, had followed his gallant leader faithfully, and borne the brunt of the war bravely until this day: though he had done many deeds of arms for which he had been praised of course, and received many kind promises of preferment, which would no doubt some day be fulfilled, and though a perfect gentleman, like most of the Highlanders, yet he had never hitherto got further than the honourable station of full private. This, however,

being the complaint of many similar gentlemen, the leaders of the expedition having a prejudice that the officers should not outnumber the men, Morrough had, as yet, contented himself as he could; but it being his turn this afternoon to mount guard at a pass beside the stream, he was agreeably surprised to find in the person of his neighbour sentinel his old acquaintance Colin M'Crone, whom he had met at Braemar, still also in his original station; and when the whoops and whoofs of the formal corporal, who had left them at their post, had passed clean away, they took the opportunity of a little soldierly gossip, being now able to speak from experience about the pleasurements of the wars and rumours.

"Got pless us! Clory an' praise put she's glad to see her, Colin! Oigh, man! here take a snuff o' the sneeshing," said Morrough, offering the other with friendly animation a comforting refreshment for his nose. "Pieugh! what for did she never see her afore in the wars?"

"Oigh! tamn her wars an' the pleasurements," said the other, sulkily. "Naething for the sporan (purse), an' little for the nose, put a lang march an' a hungry cuts, frae Strathspey to Strathbogie. Feigh! tamn her wars!" he repeated, bitterly, and with a Highland grunt.

"Oigh! it's a meeserable greusome war to be surely," said Morrough, his countenance lengthening to reciprocate the discontent; "her vera houghs an' hurdies are wauked wi' the cauld an' the weet, till her skin is as hard as a tanner's apron, an' her vera meat for her wame is naething ava but a starve an' a brust."

"But the spuilzie," said the other, comfortingly, "surely her nainsel got a claught o' the spuilzie an' a birl o' the siller in the reiving o' Dundee, forbye the herrying in the glens o' Argyle."

"Oigh! Teevil a plack! tamn her conscience!" exclaimed Morrough, chafed into spleen at the very thought. "No a silk nor a procade for the kimmer o' Braemar, nor a silver tester to her pouch the size o' a herring-scale, nor a taback for her cheek, to pe a comfortment on the march; but a three days' hunger on the braes o' Badenoch, till her pelly be clapped to her pack like a Gyptian mummy—her nose be frozen amang the snaw as red as her garters, an' the hairy dorloch on her puir shoothers as fu' o' wind as her toom wame;" and as the eloquent Highlander thus spoke, he laid his hand, with more pathos than elegance, upon that part of his body which, according to the celebrated Roman fable, had once occasion to make a sad complaint against its servant members.

"An' what'll she do when she goes to the Lowlands if she be sae prave?" inquired the other.

"She's no there yet," said Morrough, winking an eye. "Teevil hauds me frae crossing the burn this vera night, an' marching back like a shentleman to the braes o' Blair Athol. Oigh! what a pleasurement to see Glen-leg again, an' the braw kimmer o' Braemar."

"But if her nainsel gang to the Lowlands, maybe she'll pe made an offisher, or a corporal, or a machor, or maybe a captain, a whole captain, like Alaster Graham. Pieugh! she disna ken what a great man she may be in the wars of the Lowlands."

"Do ye really think sic a thoght o' me, Maister M'Crone?" said Morrough, delighted, and willing to give Highland flattery in return for flattery, "an' I wadna' wuss but the Marcoss would himsel make a creat man o' you too, Maister M'Crone; for ye're a likely lad, an' there's mony promotions in the armies, since that tam'd auld rascal, Grumach Gordon the reiver, was clean kicked out o' the clariments o' the wars. Hieugh! an' maybe when she grows a captain, an' hersel a cornal, she'll get a silk an' a sattin in the Lowlands yet, an' a praw proach like the muin, to stick in the preast o' her gausey kimmer at Braemar. Hieugh! clorification!"

"Stand to your arms, Maister Morrough! stand to your arms; here's a stranger just at the lines. Cot tamn! look at the chield, her legs are but short, yet she's louped the purn like a shelty."

"The chield! did ye say," said Morrough, scornfully, as he observed the stripling stranger who now approached, "a perfect callant; without a peard to her face or feile-beg to her hurdies, pieugh! whoe cocs there? shentlemans! speak the word o' the wars, or she's a tead man,—tamn her!"

"A friend," said the stripling, in a thin boyish voice, and the back of his hand laid to his bonnet, more with the grace of a lady's page than the manner of a soldier.

"The King, or the Covenant, this moment! afore she's shot like a plover," bawled Morrough, with redoubled valour. "Colin, stand to your cuns an' face the enemy, hieugh!"

"The King and the gallant Montrose," exclaimed the youth boldly, and still approaching nearer. "I come to your camp as a volunteer to the wars."

"Clorifications! Oigh!" screamed the other with constitutional enthusiasm, "a praw poy an' a clean leg like a chief's son, an' a sma' foot like a maiden; but no knee or a hough to be seen at the skin, like a mountain soger, although she has a bit sporan frae her waist," he added, surveying the youth from head to foot, and perceiving that he wore not the Gaelic kelt, or feile-beg, or rather short petticoat, as the English call this picturesque relic of the Roman dress, but his limbs clad with the trews, or trousers of red-barred tartan—a privilege of costume upon which few would then venture. On his head was the low military bonnet ornamented with a drooping black feather, which so well sets off a handsome face; a tartan short coat, in which the loyal red colour predominated, showed the youth's person to much advantage, particularly with the aid of the long Highland breacan or hunting-plaid thrown over the left shoulder, and twisted gracefully round the waist, its fringed folds hanging partly in front and partly covering the biodag or dirk, whose silver-mounted hilt just peeped out under the plaid, and on the right thigh. A short broad-sword buckled on the contrary side of the youth, showed that though he had no pistol in his belt, he was as well equipped for the war as many others of the army were at that period.

"An what'll her honour pe wanting in the camp o' the warriors, young man?" inquired Morrough, with somewhat of a Bobadil manner, willing to magnify as he ought the high and responsible office of sentinel outpost. "Her nainsel daurna let her pass one foot into the great camp o' the king's army, until she knows the why an' the wherefore; stand to your arms, Colin, my lad—hoop?"

"I want to see the Marquis of Montrose," said the youth, with a modest mixture of boldness and trepidation.

"Eagh! Oigh! the Marcoss! the great glory o' the Marcoss herself! you want to see the proud Montrose! pieugh, poy! it's a perfect impossiblement. She'll take aff your head for the speaking o't."

"I will pass on into the camp, if you please," said the stripling, about to go on.

"Cot tamn! will she offer to pravo the king's sentry in her ain camp? What's your piziness, young man, and where do ye come frae? petter answer me quietly, an' wi a hale skin."

"I come from the west, beyond Blair Athol, and my business is with the Marquis of Montrose."

"Frae the wast, beyond Blair Athol," repeated Morrough, hastily, and then whispering to his neighbour as if he had made some great discovery. "An' what may her honour's piziness be wi' his clory the Marcoss, if she'll tell her pleasurement?"

"My business I can only tell to the Lord Montrose himself," said the youth, becoming indignant at this idle parley.

"Then if she'll no tell her piziness, she'll gie the word o' the night," said Morrough, clapping the butt-end of the long Spanish musket, which the outposts of the camp were then allowed to carry, and standing bolt-upright in the most soldierly manner.

"I know no word," said the youth simply; "besides, it is not night until the sun sinks much further behind Ben-cruaghan."

"She disna ken the word? an' she comes frae the wast beyont Ben-lawers? Hieugh! I see it as plain as a parsnip; a spy, a vile traitor spy, frae the crafty Argyle. I'll take her to Montrose this very minute, an' tell his lordship's honour how I fund her out. Oigh! her fortune's made for this; captains an' cornals; spulzie and promotions. I saw wi' a corner o' my ee that this land-louping youngster had the very walk o' a spy, as she lay o'er the purn. Come awa, young man. If I dinna bring you to the Marcoss's honour, my name's no Morrough M'Combich."

After some further whispering with his comrade about his meditated temporary breach of military discipline, away went Morrough, accompanied by the stripling, chuckling over this mare's nest which he had just found, and thinking in his Highland ignorance, as the Lowland Scotch would say, but with perfect confidence, that this adventure was to be the means of his immediate favour and preferment.

CHAPTER XII.

The camp of Montrose, like many other things in life, appeared to the stripling, who now was led through it, and saw it in detail, to much less advantage than when he had seen its picturesque effect from an elevated distance as he descended the heights of Cairn Gorm. A part of the little army being quartered in the village behind, it was by no means extensive; the common tents, rudely formed, tattered, and dilapidated, bore all the marks of a long and toilsome campaign; the men who wandered about, or were busily employed round several fires cooking their evening meal, had, to our youth's fancy, an ill-appointed, if not haggard look; and even the tent of Montrose himself, with the Scottish standard waving over it, which in the distance had had an effect so princely and imposing, now, when seen closely with its enormous strings and pins stuck in the ground, and its inelegant proppings and tawdry stripes of red and blue, appeared to the imaginative beholder absolutely mean as well as comfortless.

Yet when our youth turned his eyes from the rude conveniences with which this hardy army were obliged to be contented, and observed the veteran faces and proud bearing of many of the Highland chieftains and gentlemen, who walked in pairs, or stood in groups around Montrose's tent, and while he tried with cautious anxiety to obtain a sight of one particular individual who might, he thought, be among them, their stern countenances, weather-beaten as they were, and their warlike bearing, tended to raise his mind above the circumstantial, and to direct it to the moral greatness of what he saw around him. While occupied with these thoughts, he found himself the gaze of the groups of officers near, and was awakened into attention by the characteristic parley of his conductor with the sentinels who stood without Montrose's tent.

"She has piziness wi' the Marcoss, an' she will see his honour's clory," said Morrough "noo, what'll she say to that? an' here's her prisoner, cot tamn! let her pass."

The sentinel, a Caithness man, seemed astonished at the southern Highlander's audacity, and without another word the elated and confident Morrough, pulling aside the hanging canvass of the tent, and pushing his companion with little ceremony within, in another instant both stood in the presence of the celebrated leader of the northern rising, and terror of the covenanters. Our youth had barely time to cast his eyes round the interior of the tent.

At a small folding table, covered with papers, sat Montrose himself. A lumber of arms, cloaks, caps, helmets, flagons, and travelling conveniences, lay partly on the bare ground, and partly on a sort of temporary beaufet behind him, and a small couch, of great simplicity of form, occupied the opposite side of the tent. While the impudent Morrough, now somewhat chopfallen from the effect of his own forwardness, was making with corresponding servility a double Highland bow, the marquis, lifting his head from the papers before him, and throwing himself back on his chair with much dignity as he surveyed the intruders, asked Morrough sharply what he desired of him.

"Your lordship's honour's clorification," began Morrough, with a graceful supernumerary scrape of his foot, "was a shentleman sentry this plessed afternoon at the pass beside the purn, when up comes this poy wi' the preeks an' wanted to come into the camp to your lordship's clory, but she couldna' gie the password, nor nought else, for a verification; an' so her nainsel found out she was frae the wast, ayont Ben-Lawers, an' pecause she was sure that she was naething but a spy frae Argyle, an' a covenanter repellion, she just brought her to your lordship's clory; thinking to be surely that her nainsel will get a promotion for her pains."

"Very satisfactory, Mr Sentinel," said the marquis, slightly smiling, and seeing at once through the matter, habituated as he was to the unreasonable claims constantly set up by his Gaelic followers. "Come you from Argyleshire, young man?" he added, addressing the youth.

"No, my lord; only from the neighbourhood of Braemar."

"I thought so. And your business with me!"

"Merely to join your lordship's army as a volunteer; but"—and the strange youth, hesitating, gave a look towards Morrough.

"You may return to your duty, sentinel," said the marquis to Morrough, "I shall keep in memory this service."

"Will it be a captain, or a cornal, or a serjeant-machor, that her nainsel will pe made?" said Morrough, standing now bolt-upright for a last effort. "She would just like the assurement afore she gaes back; for it's no every day that she stands in the noble presence o' the great Marcoss o' the wars."

"Return to your duty, sir," said Montrose, sternly, and turning towards the youth, while Morrough, muttering a disappointed hieugh! and a "tamn her sowl" or two, made off towards his post beside the stream.

"Now, young man, speak freely," said the marquis.

"In wishing to join your lordship's army for the present," said the youth, "my chief object, I confess, is, by such humble efforts as I may have opportunity of, to prevent strife between certain persons who have lately left this camp, and some who yet remain in it. If your lordship commands me, I shall state all I know, but the persons in question being related to myself, and those for whom I am interested, it may perhaps be unnecessary for me to explain further than that the apprehended quarrel is connected with the recent dismissal, or disaffection, of certain men of the Gordon's clan, who are known in the neighbourhood of Braemar, and some of whom having incurred your lordship's displeasure in the war, through the representation, as is alleged, of certain persons now in your lordship's camp, a feud is held against the latter, and it is the bloodshed meditated in consequence that I am anxious to prevent."

"Your design is most laudable, and still more remarkable for so mere a youth," said the marquis, interested with the speech of the stripling; "but I confess I do not distinctly recollect the circumstance to which you allude. You will do well to be more explicit."

"It was, as I am informed, at the battle of Inverlochy, that in the distribution of commands on the right and left wings of your army, your lordship was pleased to appoint a young soldier to a post near the centre, which was supposed to be the right of certain of the Gordon's clansmen, and particularly of one of their chiefs, who, thinking himself injured, and looking with envy upon the good fortune of the young soldier I speak of——"

"His name?" said the marquis, interrupting.

"His name, my lord marquis, is,—I believe is," said the stripling, hesitating, and colouring slightly, "Alaster Graham."

"Oh,—go on, young man, and speak up."

"Offended at the preference thus given over an ancient chief," continued the youth, "the latter and his men, when the attack began, rebelliously refused to draw a sword, and while the young soldier, for his bravery that day, was raised by your lordship to the command of a company, and is now called Captain Graham, Grumach of Braemar, and several of his men, were dismissed with disgrace. Is not this, my lord, a sufficient ground of feud between Highland gentlemen?"

"But that stubborn forest-riever cannot mean to pursue his feud against one of my bravest soldiers while the war lasts?" rejoined the marquis. "If he do, and if he attempt to make disturbance in my camp, I shall cause his head to be——"

"Surely your lordship will consider that Grumach Gordon is an old man?" interrupted the youth, with such unconscious earnestness of manner as to surprise the marquis. "Your lordship will pardon my presumption," he added, checking himself; "but methinks, even as a humble volunteer in your army, I might, as the parties are known to me, be the means of preventing any hostile meeting between them, should your lordship grant me such liberty to pass and repass in the camp, as my own good intentions, and even my life, may answer for. This, my lord marquis," said the youth, with a manner that almost rose into nobleness, "this is my humble request."

"You are a very extraordinary young man," said the marquis, interested and prepossessed beyond accounting for, as he threw himself back, and cast a curious glance over the graceful figure of the stripling, who now stood uncovered in his presence. "Your request is granted. Go and come as you please while we tarry in this valley; for there is no treachery in your unsuspicious years, and no double-dealing in that impassioned look. Draw near, youth, for you must have a sign for your safety. When you pass the outposts of the camp, at any time

should you be detained and questioned, whisper into the ear of the chief of the guard the single word *Cothrom-feinne*, and that will guarantee my favour for you by night or by day."

"Go, youth," continued Montrose, after a moment's pause, "thou hast access to me, if necessary, at any moment. Would that older and wiser men around me had more of thy generosity and singleness of heart."

The obeisance of the stripling, as he left the tent, had in it the embarrassment of struggling feelings, evidently including gratitude and admiration of the gallant leader of the expedition, which further excited the interest of Montrose; and, as he turned away his fair face to go, the eyes of the youthful mountaineer seemed to the observant nobleman to be blinded with tears.

CHAPTER XIII.

The sun had for some time sunk behind the range of mountains which sent up their peaky tops into the clouds far to the south and westward of Montrose's position, and grey evening was melting into indistinct shadows and brown masses the various romantic points of the open landscape round the camp, as the stripling, whose adventures we have now to trace, made his way towards its western extremity. Still alone and anxious to avoid observation, he proceeded on behind the rows of tents, and, though a stranger, seemed at no loss as to the quarter on which his anxieties rested.

That small portion of the southern clansmen, which, by the courtesy of war and in imitation of more regular troops, was sometimes called a regiment, and of part of which Alaster Graham, by the agreeable flattery of title, was now called the captain, was encamped on the right flank. The tent of our youthful centurion was easily distinguished from those of the common men around it by its superior size and the red standard which waved above it; which, though torn and rather awry in its position, still fluttered, with all the ragged pride of northern independence, in the cold breeze of the evening. The feelings with which the stripling looked towards that tent, and watched every figure whom he could distinguish near it, it is not our business now in so many words to explain.

Passing this tent however, and proceeding towards the sentinel who was posted nearest to it, beside the stream, our youth addressed to the man a few firm words in his native Gaelic; after which, retreating towards higher ground, he took up a position for himself on the dry bank under a rocky height, which served to protect the flank of the encampment. A young moon was already beginning to fling her indistinct beam over this softened portion of the Highland landscape; and, certain of his own intent, the youth seated himself on the bank, where unloosing the folds of his hunting plaid, and throwing it around him to protect himself from the chill breeze which now blew in fitful gusts off the overlooking mountains of Cairn Gorm, he seemed prepared to wait for some expected event with all the patience of a solitary mountaineer.

Although a glance was cast occasionally towards the tent of Alaster Graham, as well as over the busy scene throughout the extent of the camp, and a low sigh would sometimes escape the bosom of our youth, while he sat on the knoll, his general attention was given entirely to one direction of the surrounding prospect. As the slender moon above, frequently obscured as it was by the coming clouds, that flitted uncertainly with the breeze over this stormy northern sky, occasionally shone out with charming brilliancy on the sloping level, between the stream we have mentioned and the hills beyond, the youth, as he watched, ever and anon kept his eye on the plain and on the mouth of a narrow gorge or pass in the mountains, through which he had himself come to the camp on his way from Braemar.

Quite prepared for a lengthened watch, or for resuming it again on the succeeding day, the youth still kept his eyes turned towards the gorge in the hills, yet sometimes glancing round to Alaster's tent, when, apparently to his own surprise, he already observed two men issuing from the direction of the pass. The strangers, coming forth, proceeded straight across the plain, towards that part of the camp which he immediately overlooked, and this before he had sat half an hour upon the bank. Refixing his plaid in military fashion, and slowly descending from the heights, the youth addressed a few words again to the sentinel, and then went forward to throw himself in the way of the coming strangers.

"It's a fresh night and a blasty, Sir Warrior," said the first of the men, (if we may

be allowed to translate what was spoken in Gaelic,) to our youth, as he walked to and fro with seeming carelessness near the sentinel. "But it's kindly weather and favourable for the campaign," continued the speaker, trying to bespeak favour for his own design; "the evening piobrachd has not yet sounded through the valley, and perhaps we can have admission into the camp, as we are also for the king and the gallant Montrose."

"Mean you to join the army on the march to the Lowlands, gentlemen?" inquired the youth sharply.

The two men looked at each other as if uncertain what reply to make. "No," said the second, stepping forward and speaking with blunt boldness, "we merely would speak with an officer of your camp, one Alaster Graham. Bring us to him, youth, if ever you expect to be a laureled soldier."

"Know you so little of the orders of our general, as to make such a request of the officer on the outpost?" said the youth readily; "my life would answer such a dereliction of duty. But if you have any message for Captain Graham, such as a soldier may carry to his comrade, I will answer for its safe transmission."

"You are a gentleman, I perceive, young sir."

"I may not be called aught else, or be scorned with impunity," said the stripling proudly, and slapping with his hand the basket-hilt of his broadsword; "'*Nemo me impune lacessit*,' our Scottish motto, that is embroidered on the standard which floats above these tents, is also mine."

"You can carry a message, then, of honourable quarrel," said the man, stooping down and speaking in the stripling's ear with hoarse animation,—"a challenge, youth! a challenge to fight! on the sward of Strathfeagan.—Tell Alaster Graham!—tell him, that Grumach Gordon, who he knows well, sends him his glove of battle and his bitter defiance—are you afraid, boy?" added the man, throwing back his head while he grasped the arm of the youth, and discovering, by the dim moonlight, the ferocious features of John of Leask. "Ha! you have never yet seen blood spilt—but there must be blood!—Alaster Graham and two of his friends are challenged to the combat with the same number in the next glen; tell him the message, youth, as you are a gentleman."

"And does his wrath burn so hotly that he cannot stifle its flame till the war is over?" said the stripling, shrinking instinctively from the ruffianly glance of the man's eyes.

"Not a day, not an hour, if it were possible," croaked John of Leask, "and I also am included in the deep injuries of Grumach Gordon, who is now watching our return under the hill behind. Youth, officer of the night, we send the challenge and defiance by you."

"And dare you try to make me the bearer of treason and provocation?" said the stripling, his self-possession now completely recovered. "Think you that we were unaware of your treasonable and unreasonable hatred against the bravest soldier in a camp where all are brave? Ho, sentinel, there! come hither! I desire you to state before these strangers the private orders to the outposts of the camp."

"That a treasonable design being suspected," said the sentinel, after an instant, "to introduce private feud among the army, and in particular to offer vindictive provocation to the gallant Captain Graham, it is the marquis's orders that no one be admitted into the camp, and no message whatever be received anent such feud; and that shaft or bullet be not spared against any who may persist in attempting to forward such broil and brulzie."

The two strangers looked at each other in astonishment, upon finding that their design was known in the camp.

"And I am here to see these orders executed," said the youth boldly, as he stood out in the moonlight. "Go back whence you came, men of Braemar! and learn that the brave lords engaged in this noble cause know both how to protect the honour and save the blood of their best officers."

"Then I leave with you, youth, the eternal defiance both of Grumach Gordon and John Gordon of Leask, against the upstart forester, Alaster Graham," said the challengers, "and hear you, my curse and ban upon his constant good fortune!" Saying this, the implacable reiver and his companion turned to depart, and leaping the stream, they at once made their way back towards the mountains.

Our outpost stripling, somewhat agitated by this scene, was still standing in the same

spot after the departure of the strangers, watching the shadows of the receding men in the moonlight as they proceeded with all the speed of those who were anxious to deliver their tidings, across the pleasant level before him, when his attention was roused by the tread of feet near, and the approach of a file of men, to change the sentinel, caused him instinctively to shift his position, and to retire again upwards towards the bank.

Seating himself here once more, to consider what next he should do, unromantic nature in the shape of her common wants, which the anxieties of the evening had hitherto caused him to neglect, now came over the heart of our youth with clamorous urgency; and the enthusiastic volunteer of unknown wars began to be exceedingly at a loss how to procure a meal for his hunger. As for rest, that was easily arranged in a dry night, for the heath on the crag was remarkably soft, the lee-side of the height was most comfortably warm, and the plaid he wore was an ample covering as he lay on the heath under "the sweet heavens," for this roving mountaineer. But his light store of barley-cakes had long been exhausted, and being unable to crop like a kid the fragrant herbage of the bank, he, in spite of his anxiety of mind, began to look wistfully towards the fading fires of the camp, as he thought of a necessary refreshment.

As he again sat up ruminating on all things likely in his circumstances, the sound of the night-piobrachd came pleasantly over his ear, from the midst of the camp which the gallant pipers before Montrose's tent, much prouder men than the leader of the host himself, made to "skirl" with warlike wildness up the valley of Strathfeagan. Music, however rude, if the composition of nature, is a sure awakener of poetic emotions, and sad yet pleasing recollections of the forest of Braemar were beginning to steal over the fancy of the youth, when his regretful cogitations were disturbed by a measured tread of steps mounting the knoll on which he rested. In two minutes more the sentinel from whom he had recently parted stood before him, and touching his bonnet in military fashion, intimated, in two words, that his presence was earnestly requested within the tent of Captain Graham.

The very sound of the name caused a start and an emotion in the bosom of the youth; he hesitated at first, and would have excused himself, but the request seemed so nearly akin to a command, that refusal would evidently have excited suspicion. Occupied with various thoughts, which need not be explained, the stripling, rising and adjusting his plaid and his side-arms, instantly followed the sentinel towards that tent which he had so often watched in the early part of the evening.

When the canvass was drawn aside which opened into the interior of the tent, Alaster was discovered seated pensively beside a chest, which, elevated on some logs, served for a table; a burning splinter of pine-wood, fastened to the spike of a steel target that lay on the chest, served for a candle or torch, and showed the usual confusion of arms, accoutrements, and simple conveniences, required by an officer of Alaster's condition. By the wavering and spitting glare of this light the youthful features of the captain, surmounted by his dark locks, appeared handsome and expressive as ever, but thin and tinged with gravity; and the air of dignity with which he rose on the entrance of the stranger, with other circumstances of consciousness on the part of the latter, made the stripling disposed to shrink into the obscurest corner of the tent.

"Not knowing to whom I am indebted for your well-meant service, young sir," Alaster said, rising, "I have begged of you to come to me, and explain the reason of a zeal as singular as it is unobtrusive. Whatever may be the source of this attempted challenge, of which I have just heard, a soldier may not with honour to himself approve of its being turned from him. Pray speak, youth: I shall not be ready to blame so gallant a stripling."

"'Twas not for your sake only, sir, it was for the sake also of——"

"Heavens! what is this? Do I hear aright? can this really be the voice that has ever been music to my ears. Moina! my sweet, heroic Moina! I should know you in spite of the most artful disguise that ever masquer invented. And think you," he added, coming forward, and taking her shrinking hand, "you could by those dark locks hung over your own yellow hair, and by this warlike and boyish artificial costume, conceal yourself from me? Nay, blush not, nor look reproachfully on me for discovering you by that soft voice that so often charmed me in the forest of Glenskiach. I will speak now in the warmth of my heart, when my heart's

love, who is ever in my thoughts, comes to refresh my spirit, amid the toils of the camp and the harassing scenes of remorseless war."

"Oh, Alaster," she said, all the woman now melting in her voice, and into the tears that acknowledged his grateful caress—"had you heard the bitter vows against you that I have heard, and suffered the anxiety that I have suffered, both I confess on your account and that of my hot-tempered father, you would excuse the adoption of this unseemly disguise, and forgive the forwardness of a lonely maiden, who has no friend to act a manly part for her: no one who will step forth to prevent those who are dearer to her than her own life, from imbruing their hands in each other's blood, and from leaving her to sing the orphan's or the widow's lament of dooll and dolour, amid the deserted wilds of Glenskiach."

As she spoke a paleness overspread her features, her plumed bonnet fell from her hand, a faintness had come over her feminine heart, from the agitation of the interview and the long want of refreshment, and to his great embarrasment she seemed ready to swoon at his feet. Unwilling to call for assistance, he sat her down gently on a seat, and by means of such simple cordials as he had at hand, at length recovered his agitated Highland maiden, who looked more charming as the colour again returned to her cheek, and as he succeeded in soothing her modest feelings into forgetfulness of her unseemly disguise.

Calling in his servant Farquhar, who, notwithstanding his peering curiosity, could make out nothing of who was his master's guest, such refreshment was procured as the camp afforded, and never did a meal eat more sweetly than this, that was partaken by those two in Montrose's camp. As she sat opposite to him, by the military chest on which their simple refreshment was set, her ruddy fair face contrasting oddly with the dark locks with which she had disguised it, and her animation returning with the enjoyment of his society, she explained how that she had travelled on foot to the town of Aberdeen, to purchase her present disguise, by which she had been enabled to get into the camp; and how that John of Leask, the most untameably ferocious of all the exile Gordons, continually stirred up her father to the seeking of that revenge which otherwise he might have been persuaded to forego.

In such discourse did our young soldier and the Highland maiden enjoy each other's society for more than an hour, and never did lovers sit alone in the night-watch with more chaste and heart-relieving happiness. Much gentle argument passed between them on the subject of the maiden's anxious fears for the safety of both Alaster and her father, to which was opposed his perfect confidence in his good fortune and his own strength and dexterity, should circumstances again force him to meet the reiver-chief in unwilling hostility. Praising Moina for her adroit management in warding off a challenge which his honour would have obliged him to accept, whatever might have been the consequences, Alaster succeeded in persuading the anxious maiden out of her fears; and representing to her simplicity the danger as well as indelicacy of her remaining longer near the camp in her present disguise, he advised her to leave the whole matter to Providence and his own good sword, and instantly to return to her people in Braemar,—at which place he hoped soon again to meet her, when he came back from the plains of the Lowlands, with those honours and rewards which are ever the recompence of the brave.

Many pleasing anticipations of joys to come,—not, however, without that intruding pang of indefinite apprehension, which so often in this world casts a cloud over our dearest visions of future bliss—followed, in the bosom of Moina, this sanguine speech of the mountaineer soldier; and the hour for changing the sentinels being now at hand, she rose to take her departure. Dwelling still, however, as the youth accompanied her without, upon the delicious illusions of their several fancies,—when they should live together, as married lovers have lived, and roam together among the romantic vallies of Braemar—they soon arrived at the craggy height where she had formerly rested, and when they came to the burn, or streamlet, which bounded the camp, so that their final parting was at hand, standing at opposite sides of the stream, in the dim moonlight, and kissing the tokens of gold, which hung at each of their bosoms, they blessed one another in the sight of heaven,—and prayed for his protection until they should again meet in joy when the war was over.

As they separated at length—on Moina's part with a sigh of mingled hope and apprehension, and on the part of both with all the lingering reluctance of lovers,—Moina, however, secretly resolved, that notwithstanding the youth's confidence in himself, she would, retaining

her present dress, tarry in the neighbourhood for a few days longer, until the army and Alaster had fairly marched from the valley of Strathfeagan.

CHAPTER XIV.

The day succeeding the night scene sketched in the preceding chapter, was one of that sad and gloomy character, which even in the hilly north, where such days are comparatively common, had its effect upon the spirits of the hardy mountaineers, now lying inactive in this ill-appointed camp. The gusty breeze of the previous night had died away, and the morning rose with a gray and sullen gloom. A heavy rain, which fell during the night, completely drenched the mossy ground on which most of the tents were erected. Hill or mountain was not to be seen, and the dense fog, which scarcely enabled those in the centre to discern the boundaries of the camp, dropped a soaking "weet" the whole of the day, while an unwholesome thickness was in the air, and a threatening blackness hid the sky.

The state of the atmosphere, operating at first by a slightly disappointing feeling upon Montrose himself, from some plans he had formed for the day, began, as the afternoon advanced, to have a more serious effect upon him, causing a train of thought, such as will obtrude on the most vigorous minds; particularly if, like that of this gallant but unfortunate warrior, a dash of poetic elevation may help to ennoble it, while it opens to its more acute perceptions a thousand sources of inward suffering. Though continually successful, and now partly on his way towards the richer valleys of the Lowlands, victory itself had not reconciled the Marquis to the irreparable loss of his gallant companion, Lord Gordon; and the uncertainties of life, of success, and of fame, struck upon his heart on this particular morning, with ominous impression, as if an involuntary revelation had been made to him of his own ultimate fate. Numbers of his men, as usual, had deserted him for the time, after the battle of Alford; the clans that subsequently joined his standard, when he descended into the plains, had as yet given him no indication of their favourable intentions, and the thick mist of this dull day hid from his anxious observation even the dim outlines of the distant hills, down which, if nothing unfortunate had happened, ought now to be descending an important reinforcement.

But the whole day passed gloomy and uncomfortable, and no intimation came of the expected clansmen. The discomfort of their situation, as they lingered unemployed in the midst of an unsheltered and marshy strath, began to affect the minds of the eager Highlanders; and towards evening their impatience to be gone to the south became audible to their officers in sullen and ill-suppressed murmurs. This feeling of discontent Captain Graham himself began to partake of, in a way for which he could not account, particularly in the latter part of the day, and as evening gathered round in thick obscurity over the cloudy mountains of Cairn Gorm; for that melancholy which had gradually been approaching his mind all day, buoyant as it had been by the thoughts of his Moina, fell now with involuntary heaviness over his heart, as if some coming event was casting its dark shadow before, and as if the very air which he breathed, and the low whisperings of the wind which now came sighing down the valley, while the dim moon began to rise in the stormy sky, meant to warn him of some approaching evil.

As the succeeding night advanced, the breeze greatly and unexpectedly increased, and was heard to moan with an eiry expression through the scattered birch-wood behind the camp, or to swirl in gusty thuds through the passes of the hills; but from the comparative calm in the camp itself, it seemed that the storm was raging in the upper air only, and driving the clouds speedily towards the ominous airt of the Lowlands. Then strange and solemn thoughts would cross the mind of Alaster as he gazed athwart the dim plain, and the dread fancies of the invisible world seemed to gather round him, which either in their secret joy or their indefinite apprehension, hallow the visions of superstition by connecting them with immortality, and give ignorance itself a body and a use, if not even a pleasure, which knowledge, with all her flatteries, often fails to communicate. Whether it was the dim Bodach Glas of the moonlight that haunted his spirit this strange night, or the inexplicable Twaish or second sight of the Gael, that pointed its airy finger into the vista of futurity, Alaster thought he saw himself far away in the Lowlands, and Moina Gordon sitting solitary in the wilds of Braemar,

musing sadly and anxiously concerning him,—watching every rumour that came from beyond the Grampians, and praying for his safe return as only a maiden prays for him she loves, until a sad foreboding began to cling to his fancy, that the dark form of destiny had interposed between them, and that he was never more to see her in life.

But the shrill and stirring sound of the piobrachd of the night, as it struck on its warlike note in the bosom of the camp, and mingled in the distance with the stormy breeze of the hills, awakened him from his reverie, and presently after, the tall figure of a man, who, wrapped in his plaid, had been strolling meditatively alone behind the tents, came close up, and seemed to wish to address him. Alaster stepped forward, impressed by the dignified bearing of the figure, and instantly was saluted by the Marquess of Montrose himself.

A few short sentences passed between them, in which the marquess complimented the courage and conduct of his youthful officer, and alluding with pride more than with blame to the impatience of his men to be led forward to the Lowlands, and to his disappointment of the expected reinforcement, for which he had vainly looked the whole of the day, added rather abruptly,——

"Graham, you know the passes of these mountains; at least you can tell the route by which the Macalisters are likely to come?"

"I do, my lord marquess," said the youth, proud of the confidence with which he was treated; "and what knowledge I lack, can well be supplied by the gilly who has attended me throughout the campaign, should your lordship honour me so far as to allow me to start forth from this valley as soon as day-light breaks, to reconnoitre from such points in the hills as we are acquainted with, and bring you the first tidings of the Macalisters' coming."

"You shall go, sir," said Montrose, pleased with the ready zeal of Alaster, "and I doubt not good tidings shall sit on your brow before the day is far spent. But whom else will you take with you? for I am told you have enemies, who may be in this very neighbourhood. That volunteer stripling, who lately joined us in the camp, shall accompany you, if his youthful limbs are not too delicate for climbing the steeps of Cairn Gorm. A-propos, Mr Graham, where is he? I have not seen him all day."

"He is, my lord marquess, I believe——" said Alaster, slightly confused; "but excuse me; it were unnecessary to take him to the hills."

"And is he then not in the camp?"

"No, my lord."

"Graham," said the marquess, after a moment's thought, and laying his hand familiarly on Alaster's shoulder, "something from the first struck me about that handsome volunteer, that I could not explain to myself; I see it all now. Nay, disguise it not, though you could; 'tis a soldier's fortune to love and be loved. The pretty stripling in the bonnet and trews was a woman!"

"I confess it was the case, my lord," said Alaster, after a short pause of deliberation, "but I was not the encourager of the maiden's adventure, nor, suffer me to say, has the affair aught to do with my duty to your lordship and my king."

"Alas! young man," replied the marquess thoughtfully, and stepping back while he surveyed Alaster's person, various matters in his own experience at the moment crossing his recollection, "how little know you of yourself if you think that the affairs of the heart have nothing to do with our ambitions and our aims! Mr Graham," he added, "upon second thoughts, it may be better that you should not leave the camp; a meaner messenger can effect this service, and I have too much to do for you in fair strife, when we get to the Lowlands, to allow you to run any risks among these hills."

"My lord marquess," said the youth, with animation, as his hand caught the basket head of his claymore, "may I not be trusted with my own defence, after the honour your lordship has deigned to confer upon me? Besides, it would be doing me an obligation to allow me to relieve your anxieties, instead of remaining inactive in the camp."

"Then do as you will," said Montrose, "but at least take two men to accompany you, and if you see the Macalisters or the Macalpins from the summits of Cairn Gorm, return at once; but you may advertise me of your tidings, by causing your servant to blow a blast on your forester's horn, when you come to the brow of that hill above the stream."

"All the camp shall hear it, and all the valley shall echo it," replied Alaster with pride, "from Beantanard to Glenhouraghan."

"Farewell then, Captain Graham," said the marquess, kindly, "and whatever befals you within or without the camp, remember that I hold your life and safety in no slight value."

The weight that had lain on Alaster's spirits all day was dispelled for a time by this interview with his brave chieftain. In spite of himself, however, it returned again when he had retired to rest, and as, unable to sleep, he lay and listened to the low moaning of the wind which swept down the valley, and its buzzing sound, as it whistled round the tent over his head, and thought again of his Moina, and of the romantic glens of Braemar. Anon sleep would come over him indefinitely, although he thought he was waking, and dim forms appeared to his superstitious fancy to hover round his low couch; and then, in the changes of his dream, Moina Gordon seemed to breathe upon his cheek, as she did on that night when she first loosed the thongs that bound him, while she smiled seductively as at first. But again their fond whisper seemed to be interrupted by the brattle of the red-deer rushing past among the boughs of the forest, and then the loud slogan of the Gordons came echoing, as he thought, from the inner coiries of the glens, and the flashing eyes of Grumach, her father, seemed to glare upon him; but as he continued to gaze on the angry countenance of the old man, his grey hairs gradually dropped off, and, to his horror, a grinning skull supplied its place, and then weeping and lamentation rose on the night-wind, and the piercing coronach boomed wildly in his dreaming ear; and while he seemed to listen to the sound until he almost wept on his hard pillow, the forms melted away into confusion, till all was lost in deep but uneasy sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

The broad rim of the morning sun was barely peeping over the summit of Benhenigh, and throwing his gleaming rays along the sloping valley of Strathfeaghan, as Alaster and his men, that is, Farquhar and Morrough M'Combich, leaped the small streamlet that bounded the straggling camp of the Highland army, and set forth upon their reconnoitring expedition. The plain over which they next passed was better for travelling than Alaster had expected, for the wind had dried the ground considerably; the present morning was fair and sunny, and the fancies of the night having been dispelled by the cheering light of a new day, the travellers footed their way towards the hills, with all the delighted agility of mountaineers, and feelings which reminded them of those happy mornings bygone, when they had so often gone out to the sport in the interesting wilds of Braemar.

The long valley of Strathfeaghan, with the crowded tents of the army, soon lay like a small green stripe beneath the travellers, as the three mounted the hills like goats, and scrambled their way through the rugged passes towards those points in the mountains that enabled them to overlook the glens beyond. At length, as the day advanced, and as they drew near to a pleasant brow of soft green furze, Morrough began, as usual, to feel an uncommon gnawing about his stomach, and thought it full time to remind his leader, that although when a man became a gentleman, he seemed also to acquire the faculty of living without food, yet that that was an attribute which it did not seem likely that *he* should ever acquire. Alaster, however, having kept Mr Morrough at much distance since he had come to his dignity, the latter was obliged to have his words well ordered and few when he dared to speak to the captain.

"Pleasurement, your Captainship's glorification," said Morrough, as he came forward with the back of his hand to his bonnet, and meaning to be exceedingly polite, as well as to speak his best English—"there's a bread an' a cheese in the wallet, an' a drap o' Jack Barley-corn's bluid in the searrag; the bannocks I've brought frae the clachan are capital gude for the hungaryment o' the hills; and as for the usquebaugh, it's a perfect sin no' to drink it just on this pleasant spot—for ye see, begging your excuses for the freedom o' the parley, to tell you the naked truth, Captain, whatever may be your honour's case, my stomach is not made of pat-metal, and I must eat."

"Deevil pe in your craving wame,' said Farquhar, pulling the impudent remonstrant aside, "canna ye wait till the Captain gie us the word o' the fuglement? Never heed her croaking pelly, your honour's pleasure," he added to Alaster, "ye may just be used by this time wi' Morrough's grumbling guts."

"Truly, lads, the belly is a beggar that sometimes will take no denial," said Alaster, entering into the humour of his petitioners, "particularly when he is carried over mountains

like these, the air of which makes him more clamorous than it is always convenient to satisfy. But it is well that you have not forgotten the provant, and if you'll just wait 'till we got to the brow of the heights yonder, I shall myself be glad to break bread with you."

"Hieugh! pless her honourable clory," exclaimed Morrough, snapping his fingers, and running towards the brow of the pass. "I kent her pleasurement wadna' starve the puir lads on the march, as lang as there was a bannock in the pouch, or a prochans-making o' meal in the poke—pieugh! Farquhar, boy, her maister'll soon gar her book the bag, for a' her stinginess."

A brisk foot-trod of a few minutes brought them all to the upper end of the pass, where, on an inviting bank of soft heath and herbage, they sat themselves, and many a good "whang" of their homely bread and other provant served to stay that pleasantest of healthy appetites; and with the pungent seasoning of a hearty dram of the pure cordial of the Highlander, administered from the searrag, to add caloric to their necessary draught to the cold spring that dribbled from the rocks, made a meal more sweet to the three mountaineers, than is often eaten off gold in the halls of the south.

"Whisht! gie her a pardonment—please her honour," exclaimed Morrough, as he bolted the last indifferently masticated mouthful;—"huish—did ye na' hear a sound?"

"What sound?" said Farquhar, surlily, beginning to be jealous; "what'll she pe hearing noo? just as if she had a langer lug than her petters."

"I'll swallow the steel sken-ocle on my hip like a cheese-paring," he added, jumping up, "if I dinna' hear a piper's piobrachd doon the glen. Oigh! it'll be the Macalisters, as sure's a gun."

The party all rose and followed Morrough towards a shelving point on the height; but though they sometimes imagined they heard the reedy sound of the bagpipe coming on the breese from the far distance beneath, as yet they could see nothing of any approaching band. As they went forward, however, and valley and glen spread out successively beneath them, the sight of his native hills in the distance, together with the effects of his exhilarating refreshment, made Morrough quite wild with delight, and sometimes screaming with joy, he became almost umanageable.

"Oigh! pleesings and clories!" he exclaimed to his servitor companion; "what would she gie to set her feet on the gowan that grows this vera morening on the braes o' Apine, or even adown the bonnie howms o' Braemar! I say, Farquhar, my man, speer at her honour's Captainship, if we may take a start athort the braes, just to get ae smack o' the braw kimmer that wends ayont the castle—hieugh! if I just had her in my oxter this precious minute."

"Face about and turn to the left, lads," said Graham, as they came to the angle of the mountain. "There is no appearance of the Macalisters, at least from this point, and we must take the other pass in our way back towards Strathfeaghan, for be our tidings what they may, we must take care to be in the camp again before sunset."

"Och! och! hear ye that, Farquhar, lad?" said Morrough, chop-fallen, as he reluctantly complied with the unwelcome order. "Och! och! I see it as plain's a parritch, she mean joost turn her back on the bonnie Highland mountains, like a banishment, for she's gaun to the Lowlands to get her death, an' she'll never see the kimmer o' Braemar any more."

The pathetic sentiment, uttered by the honest Highlander, was not confined entirely to himself or his servitor friend. Even he who gave this command complied with it, in his own person, with a feeling of regret and disappointment. That feeling was deepened as he continued to walk on in silence; and now the afternoon began to lower, and a grey mist to overspread the sky, while the bare and bleak hills among which the party travelled, began next to assume that solemn hue, in their purple and sterile wildness, which communicates its tinge of poetic melancholy to the imaginative mountaineer of the dismal north. The involuntary suggestions of the foregoing night again came across the thoughts of Alaster with a sort of prophetic sadness; his mind became acutely sensitive with its own reflections, until the very rocks that frowned over his head, and the glens and ravines that winded beneath the narrow passes along which he encircled the wild mountains, seemed to send up strange whisperings to his ears, or at least to his fancy.

At length Alaster and his followers came to the point from which he was to have sounded his horn. had he obtained a sight of the expected reinforcement, but this spot he was obliged

to leave behind him without any note to announce his approach to the camp. They soon after descended into a glen, which terminated in the gorge that led to the plain where Montrose's army lay. Following the course of the brook which winded along the bottom of the glen, while he mused on the ill success of his day's adventure, Alaster cast his eyes accidentally towards the rocks beyond the brook, when he perceived three men whispering together quite near him, and proceeding as if to intercept his passage through the gorge. A hasty exclamation broke from his own men on their observing this; and a second glance served to show him the stern and embrowned countenances of Grumach Gordon, John of Leask, and another well-know reiver from Glenskiach, whom Alaster could not name. Perceiving that they were observed, old Gordon took a few racing steps down the bank, leaped the stream, and was instantly followed by his two companions who, with himself, had been dismissed with disgrace from Montrose's army, and now seeming to rejoice in the success of their watchful dodging of the youth as he returned, by which they expected to gratify their burning thirst for revenge.

A sensation, very unusual to his bold and boyant spirit, shot through the mind of Alaster, in the mood he was, on observing this. Casting his eyes from the savage countenances of those who stood before him round upon the silent and lonely glen in which they were, he felt as if the saddening fancies which had oppressed him all the previous day and night were now in some manner about to be realized. But there was no time for reflection. The father of his Moina stood here in his path, pale with long-treasured malice, his eyes flashing with rage and the anticipation of immediate revenge. Before Alaster came quite near to the men, three long claymore already gleamed in the red rays of the sinking sun, which ominously seemed at the moment to be withdrawing his light from the glen.

Draw your three swords against one man, gentlemen?" said Alaster quietly, as he came up. "This looks warlike, and somewhat hasty in such a spot as this."

"Are there not three of you too?" said Grumach Gordon, answering in Gaelic, with a triumphant scowl, "and is not the green sod as good in one place as another to settle a bitter quarrel upon?"

"The quarrel is of your seeking, not of mine, Grumach Gordon," said Alaster, in his usual calm tone, "and you wrong yourself as well as me in thus pursuing me with vengeful spirit, for I have never injured you."

"Hah!—never injured me!" repeated the old man, as he exchanged looks with John of Leask. "Hear you this insulting speech of my mortal enemy?—But he is no true man, and fears to meet me on a fair field, for all his boast and his glaumorie. I see it now well, audacious youth," continued the reiver, rising in wrath, "when the devil with whom you deal, and who has hitherto given you the victory, deserts you under the broad light of day, you dare not face me—you are a coward!"

A pang passed through the heart of Alaster as this intolerable expression was uttered, and as he observed the triumphant sneers of the other Gordons; but he remembered his vow to the gentle Moina, renewed so recently in his own tent, and felt the gold token at his breast, as if it burned over his heart. "Grumach Gordon," he said, "I am an officer in the service of my country; I charge you, in the king's name, to let me and my followers pass to the camp in peace."

"May my good claymore be broken over my head, and may I be proclaimed a coward like yourself, if I have not a fall with you ere we part on this very sod, and if I see not your blood reeking on my blade this night, though my own life should be the forfeit!"

"Old man," said Alaster, solemnly, "I bear from you what I would bear from no man. I offer you peace and conciliation. I charge you for your own sake, whose blood I would not willingly spill, for the sake of your gentle orphan daughter, to think what you do."

"The mention of this word, his daughter, seemed to rouse the old man's rage beyond endurance. "Villain! viper! scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "You have stolen my daughter from me—you have bewitched and decoyed by your arts the child of my bosom—she has fled from me, and you have ruined her. Draw, or I will plunge my sword to the hilt in your deceitful breast. Here, Leask!—swear with me!—swear that the earth on which we tread shall drink the blood of one of us—or shall hide one corpse in its dark womb, to be made so even here before the morning."

As soon as these words were uttered by the old man, the whole three deer-stalkers took

one step forward, and looking up to Heaven with their naked blades raised aloft, they next, according to the Gaelic custom upon solemn occasions, thrust the points of them together into the earth at their feet.

"Maister," said Farquhar aside, and coming forward with a look of solemn excitement, "my dream's rede: this is to be a bloody night; I heard the death-croak all day among the hills, and it is even now in my ears. There are some appointed to die who are here, and some whom we see not now—but I will stand by you till the last."

"There's a wreathe come across my een," said Morrough next, and looking solemnly towards the sky, "I see it in the lift. But I'll lose my life in this glen afore I hear her glory an' honour ca'd a shame an' a coward. Here's my claymore for't," he added, drawing, "an' there's three gude men of us to the wild reivers."

"Shall I take your life with your own sword in the scabbard?" cried Grumach, gnashing his teeth, and offering his point at Alaster's breast.

"You will rue this, Grumach Gordon, and I will rue it too," said Alaster, as he deliberately drew his claymore. "But I see there is a feedom before us both, and fate must be fulfilled."

As their blades crossed, the old reiver lounged furiously at first, but as if suddenly recollecting former trials of the same kind, he next fought with caution, and death and life seemed to be well believed by all to hang upon their several exertions.

"Is it not three to three?" said Leask, savagely, eying Alaster's men. "Though ye are servitors and wretches, yet here's at you for your master's sake, and Heaven help the last of a side!" In another instant the whole six persons were struggling together in mortal combat.

Confident in his own strength and dexterity, and anxious to spare the life of the father of his Moina, Alaster, as formerly, fought on the defensive, though he never found his old enemy so vigorous or so determined as he now was. Pursuing this mode, he unconsciously retreated a few paces towards the rocks behind him, when, as he parried with some difficulty the vigorous sword of his opponent, his attention was arrested by a sudden cry from one of the combatants, and he observed Farquhar drop in agony on the sod, while the savage John of Leask drew the blade of his long claymore slowly from out the body of his faithful servant. The shock of this sight had scarcely passed, when he felt the same sword ring against his own target, as with looks of tenfold ferocity the wild reiver joined his arm in double charge with that of Grumach Gordon. The necessity of exertion now added new nerve to the arm of the young soldier, and dashing at both with terrible strength, he by a single backstroke, which almost carried the head from the shoulders of his new opponent, laid John of Leask dead at his feet.

The old chieftain now drew back in astonishment, and as both for an instant took breath, Alaster observed Morrough M'Combich grappling with his antagonist, the blood streaming plentifully from his bare knee; and as they struggled, the former tumbled disabled into the dry bed of the stream, while the latter, regardless of his immediate antagonist, or thinking him dead, came forward menacingly, and soon joined his vindictive sword to that of Grumach Gordon.

The fight was again renewed, the two against one, and soon appeared to look serious to Alaster, for his climbing of the hills all day had tired him long before this combat was forced upon him, and his strength he found could not much longer avail him against two comparatively fresh men. Forced to retreat towards the rock, he was fighting with his back near it with determined bravery, when, as he was making a spring against one of his adversaries, the attention of all was suddenly arrested by a screaming cry from the height above, and in another instant, the quick footsteps of some one descending the bank were heard nearly behind where Alaster struggled in this unequal battle. A second piercing scream echoed down the lonely glen, and immediately after the sheathed blade of some interfering stranger was vainly interposing between the infuriated combatants.

"For mercy's sake cease!" faintly screamed a third time the same shrill voice; but in the eagerness of the strife none seemed to know it but the amazed Alaster, upon whose heart it now struck so as almost to render him powerless, while the distracted stranger in the bonnet

and trews threw herself before him as if determined to receive on her own slender body the furious blows desperately aimed at her lover.

"Beware!—chieftain, beware!" shouted Alaster, from a sudden apprehension, as he struggled terribly in the midst of the confusion.

"Curse you! whoever you are, that would deprive me of my revenge," cried the infuriated Grumach—"there—take the steel—'twill may be serve you both!" and at the same instant his long sword blade passed sheer through the body of Moina Gordon, wounding even her lover beyond, whose body she thus shielded with her own. Another second had scarcely passed, when, as Alaster caught on his left arm the sinking maiden, his other opponent, taking advantage of this circumstance, succeeded in burying his sword deep in the exposed side of the unfortunate youth, who staggering back, holding Moina in his arms, supported himself against the rock that had frowned over this fatal combat.

"Hold me up, Alaster—my dear Alaster, hold me up—till I speak," murmured the faint voice of the Highland maiden,—"surely it was not by the hand of my own father that I have received my death,"—and she tried to stop with her trembling hand the blood that gushed from her bosom.

A few moments passed in perfect silence, as the old man stood gazing on both, and almost gasping for breath, from his late desperate exertion. Something struck him, however, in the sound of the last voice, and drawing near to gaze in the face of the drooping maiden, still hanging in Alaster's arms, and both supported by the rock, his countenance assumed an expresion such as may not be described, as he shouted, or rather croaked, in an agony of horror—

"Mercy of Heaven! what is this?—is this Moina?—my orphan child, Moina—that I have stabbed with my own hand?" and the old man absolutely howled aloud in despairing consternation.

"I told you you would rue this fatal day, Grumach Gordon," said Alaster, faintly,—"see you what you have done to your much wronged child? It was she who, forced by your own vindictive vows, to adopt this unseemly garb, prevented you from carrying an unreasonable revenge into the very camp of Montrose, while I have been a constant peacemaker between you and your enemies for her sake. Now we are both requited, for our hearts' blood mingles together on the green sod of this valley—and we shall be buried together," he added, straining the dying maiden to his bosom—"buried in one grave in bonnie Glentowart, and lie together cold and quiet, for this is a sadder day for you, Grumach, than it is even for us!"

Need we dwell upon the petrified look of the old man as he still gazed on the blanched countenance of his dying daughter, while all the circumstances of his unquenchable revenge crowded upon his thoughts, from the first prediction of woe in the cave within the forest, to the impressive curse which rose in the festive hall of Braemar. As he grasped the clammy hand of the maiden, his scream of sorrow was absolutely heart-rending. Then when laying his ear close to her face, he heard her whisper of sincere forgiveness, and received her touching filial blessing, he covered his face with his bloody hands, and stamping on the earth in the bitterness of his grief, called upon Heaven in its mercy to strike him dead on the spot.

"Alaster, my dear, faithful friend," said Moina, now looking up, "bear me, if you can, to the brook, and lave my brow with the cool stream—for oh! I am faint, and death is at my heart. Now, alas! you seem weak too, but do not look so sadly on me—we shall meet again hereafter!"

He was barely able to assist her to the brook, and to lave her pale face in the stream, while he hung over her and kissed her warm lips; then with a breaking heart he watched over her, and both their lives seemed fast ebbing together.

"Embrace me, Alaster, once more," she whispered, "and bless me before I die—ah! dear—dear friend—alas! is this to be the end of all our hopes and our love?"

As the dying lovers thus communed together, the old man sat on a stone near watching both in the dumb stupidity of despairing grief, while the remaining reiver ran and told the news to the outer sentinels of the camp. The wounded Morrough next crawled from the bed of the stream where he had for some time lain, and startled the deep silence of the narrow glen in

which all this was acted, by the howl of bitter lamentation which burst from his warm heart on witnessing the fate of his beloved captain. Darkness now began to gather over the valley, as the lovers still comforted each other on the verge of death; but before the moonlight had fairly penetrated to the depths of the glen, the struggling spirit of the Highland maiden had fled for ever.

The news of the catastrophe having soon spread in the camp, a party of Highland gentlemen instantly proceeded to the pass, anxious for the life of their brave comrade, whom they wished at once to carry to his tent. But no entreaty could prevail on Alaster to separate himself, while he continued to breathe, from the body of his deceased love, and a small sheiling near received for the present both the living and the dead. Here he lay beside the corpse for the remainder of the night, but as long as life remained the happy youth persisted in refusing either to allow his wounds to be dressed, or to permit the body of his Moina to be removed out of his sight; but continuing, while he had strength, to mourn over her, to kiss her cold brow, and to talk to her as if she was still able to hear him, he murmured constantly of meeting her in a better world, until, on the following morning, before the sun had scattered the mists from the top of Cairn Gorm, his own spirit had joined hers in the dim mansions of eternity.

The regret, or rather grief, even of Montrose himself, for the loss of his handsome and promising officer, he gave expression to in some stanzas still extant, said to be written by his own hand.

The Highland army now marched from Strathfeaghan, and the bodies of Alaster and of Moina Gordon were carried back to the castle of Braemar. It was a morning of sad and affecting excitement that, when the cold remains of these two lovers were "lifted" amid a bewailing crowd from all the hills round, to be borne to that grave in which they had desired to be buried together. A sad sight it was, and a sore reflection it afforded, to all the young hearts then present, who can fancy the delights which true love may bring, could its course, ever in this world, be expected to run smooth; and the piercing scream of the loud coronach of sorrow, and the wild and affecting strains of the bagpipes, as the bodies were carried up the strath of the Dee to the lonely burying-ground of Cronan, had such effect on the mountaineer multitude, that cailach or maiden, whoever heard it, never, it is said, could forget it more.

All that further belongs to our legend, besides the well known fate of the unfortunate Montrose, is, that Morrough M'Combich, having partially recovered of his wounds, was afterwards killed in the bloody field of Kilsyth, in the Lowlands. As for the wretched Grumach Gordon, the cause of this whole tragedy, he became quite deranged from grief and remorse, lived for some time, more like a wild beast than a man, among the goats and the eagles in the fastnesses of Blair Athol; and now, when many high names of the time have long been forgotten, the tragical tale of the brave forester and his Highland maiden is still told or sung with tears and moralising among the solitary glens of Braemar.

THE END.

MY UNCLE'S GARRET WINDOW.

A PANTOMIMIC TALE.

BY

M. G. LEWIS.

——— "He looks through Galileo's eyes."—Pope.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY J. CLEMENTS, LITTLE PULTENEY STREET,

FOR THE PROPRIETORS OF

THE ROMANCIST AND NOVELIST'S LIBRARY.

1841.

MY UNCLE'S GARRET-WINDOW.

CHAPTER I.

"With silent steps I'll follow you all day."—DRYDEN.

My uncle was a genius and a poet—of course, he was as poor as David's rat, and lived in a garret. He was a kind-hearted man, and I loved him too sincerely to hesitate at putting my neck in jeopardy once a day by climbing the crazy ladder, which afforded the only means of reaching his celestial abode. Yet after my taking all this trouble it frequently happened that I found my uncle too busy with the Muses to bestow any of his attention on so insignificant an animal as his nephew. On these occasions he contented himself with shaking me by the hand in silence, laying his finger on his lip, and pointing to a joint-stool, which stood close by the window; for he occupied himself the only chair in the room, and even that had but three legs to boast of: the joint-stool therefore, though not so dignified a seat, was in fact a much more secure and comfortable one.

But when I found myself established on my joint-stool, how was I to employ myself? When my uncle was seized with one of these fits of inspiration, they frequently continued for a considerable time: where then was I to find amusement during this interval? My uncle was too much an author to think anybody's works worth reading except his own; for those I happened to have no great taste, and I did not care to affront him by asking for the productions of any other brain. Reading then was out of the question; but in order that my eyes might not be quite idle, I employed them in examining what was going on in the house opposite to us. By the help of a pocket telescope I could distinctly see everything which passed in our neighbour's first and second floor; and after indulging myself for some days in these observations, I became so well acquainted with every member of this unknown family, that I felt myself as much interested about their proceedings as if I had been a member of it myself.

You will say that this systematic *espionage* was not very honourable: I allow it. But then, on the other hand, it was very entertaining; and I am now going to bribe you to approve of my conduct, by admitting you to a partnership in my stolen knowledge.

The street which my uncle inhabited was narrow, and the quarter was not one of the most fashionable: but the furniture of the house in question convinced me that its owner must certainly be a man of considerable opulence. This owner (for the sake of distinction we will call him Sempronius, for I have been too much occupied by his actions to have inquired for his real name as yet) this owner is not exactly the sort of man whom I should voluntarily have selected for the hero of my tale; but beggars must not be choosers, and I must take the good man as I find him. He seems to labour under some hypochondriacal complaint, and as he frequently suffers himself in his moments of weakness to indulge his ill-temper, I have not the least hopes of working him up into a portrait of heroic fortitude: on the other hand, I have as little hopes of his furnishing my drama with a striking character for my villain. It's true, he governs his whole family with a rod of iron, and I have already discovered that he is completely a domestic tyrant: every one seems to feel constrained in his company; and it is only in the absence of the master of the mansion that innocent mirth ventures to show itself within its doors. Yet still I observe that, with the same unbending gravity with which he censures his wife and rates his servants, he receives every Sunday the visits of a distressed emigrant (with whose worth and whose wants accident has made me well acquainted), to whose complaints he seems to listen with unwearied patience, and whom he never suffers to depart with empty pockets. As the poor gentleman retraces his steps, I observe that his walk is firmer and lighter, and that not unfrequently a tear trembles in his eye; but he never

quits the street without turning back, and with clasped hands casting a look of gratitude towards the window of Sempronius's study. Sempronius then has a good heart, but a most intolerable temper. Well! well! we will hope that his ill-temper proceeds from ill-health and from increasing years, for Sempronius cannot now be far from his grand climacteric. I conclude this from the colour of his hair, which here and there age has already silvered.

I conjecture that he must be a merchant of some kind or other. What makes me think this is, that the ground-floor of his house looks as if it had been converted into a magazine. Besides, he is regularly absent from home exactly at 'Change hours: I am rather of opinion that he dabbles in the funds.

But how in the name of wonder could Sempronius, so little amiable as he appears to be, have obtained such a treasure as the wife whom I am now going to describe?—or rather, how came he to be so singularly fortunate as to draw two such great prizes in Hymen's lottery; a lottery, in which (Heaven have pity on all poor Christian husbands!) there are so many blanks?—Many years ago he lost a wife.....Oh! she was worthy to have been the empress of her whole sex!—So beautiful.....so good.....—"You have seen her then?"—(Such was my uncle's demand one day, when I was indulging myself in enthusiastic but just commendations of the lady in question)—"You have seen her then? You knew her?"—"Alas! never! I was not so fortunate"—"But you have been told of her charms and merits?"—"Not a syllable; I never heard her mentioned in my life"—"Then pray, how are you so certain, that she was so beautiful and so good?"

"Why, my dear uncle, you must know that her picture in oil hangs in the second wife's sitting-room, and never was my eye gratified by more perfect features, or a more noble countenance: and that this countenance belonged to the wife of Sempronius there can be no doubt. Sempronius himself (but much younger) is introduced in the picture; and the attitude in which the painter has represented them sufficiently marks the relation of the parties: besides, if there were no other reason for concluding that she was his wife, I should be convinced of it by the striking resemblance between her countenance and that of a young man about twenty, who appears to be our neighbour's son, and probably is the only offspring of this marriage."

"Well! sir! well! so much for her beauty and her marriage. Now sir, granting that she was a wife, what makes you suppose that she must necessarily have been a good one?"

"My dear sir, it is quite impossible that she should have been otherwise. Whenever Sempronius is displeased with his present help-mate he never fails to point to that portrait: he seems to contrast her conduct with that of the object of his reproof, and to hold her up as a model for the imitation of her whole sex; while, on the other hand, his second wife (she is reading 'King Lear' at this moment, for the edition is Boydell's, and I can distinctly read the title; so we will call her Cordelia, if you please). Cordelia then, whenever she finds her patience on the point of being shipwrecked among the numberless little domestic storms which the unhappy temper of our friend Sempronius is perpetually raising, constantly fixes her eyes on that mild heavenly countenance, and seems to ask, 'In this situation how would you have acted?' She then turns to her peevish husband with a serene look; the clouds of displeasure which were gathering on her brow have totally disappeared; she takes his hand kindly, as if imploring his pardon for having given him offence and never leaves him till her winning manners and engaging smiles have charmed away his ill-humour, as David's lyre banished the evil spirit from the bosom of the frantic Saul."

"But pray, nephew, what makes you be so certain that the original of this portrait, which produces such beneficial effects, is no longer in existence?"

"Surely the presence of a second wife is a proof fully sufficient of the decease of a first."

"But there may be no second wife in the case: Cordelia may be his daughter."

"Impossible, my dearest uncle! absolutely impossible! A thousand little circumstances, the tender familiarity which exists between her and Sempronius, the authority with which she governs the whole house, the intimate yet respectful conduct towards her of her step-son Edward (you see I make no scruple of christening my neighbours over again), the difference which Sempronius makes in his behaviour when addressing her and when addressing the said Edward. No; it is quite impossible that Cordelia should be anything but his wife. Besides, to put the matter out of all doubt, you must know that there is a little boy about eight or nine years old, whose features exhibit the same mixed resemblance to Cordelia and Sempronius

which Edward's exhibit to Sempronius and the lady, of whose portrait I have spoken in terms of such warm approbation."

Cordelia then is the wife of Sempronius; and what a wife! Perhaps she is the only woman on earth worthy to occupy the place of her predecessor! Her whole constitution seems to be composed of gentleness and benevolence; and, in truth, it was necessary that she should be composed of such materials, in order that the vinegar of her husband's disposition might be softened down and rendered supportable by the infusion of her oil of roses. I am thoroughly instructed in her mode of life, for I can overlook the whole of her sitting room. It joins on to her husband's study, and here she passes the greatest part of the day. Here she sits, works, writes, and reads: some of her books are now lying in the window, and even at this distance I can distinguish the names of 'Shakspeare,' 'Cowper,' and 'Paley.' Here it is that she settles all the affairs of her household, and from hence, as from their centre, I can see good order, diligence, and economy spread themselves forth, and pervade every department of her family. Different occupations have all their stated hours: always active, always employed, without noise, without hurry, she manages that everything should be done in its proper time and place; and the hand with which she governs the whole machine is no less light than sure and steady.

I will only mention two other points in Cordelia's character, which have struck, and which please me particularly. The one is, that in spite of her husband's lectures and frequent appeals to it, she still suffers the portrait of his first wife to decorate her own private apartment. The other is, that in her endeavours to sooth her husband she never fails to be successful, and that in her presence Sempronius always seems to be less gloomy and less unruly than when he is beyond the sphere of her influence.

Her step-son is established in the second floor; his room is exactly over his father's study, and there prevails in it an air of such systematic confusion—books, letters, old pens and ink-stands lie so mingled together upon all the chairs and tables, and sheets of half-written paper full of blots and scratches are so constantly fluttering about the chamber, that I have no sort of doubt of his being a poet; not to mention a large book in a white parchment cover, which has quite the look of a common-place book, and in which he frequently writes a few lines, after biting the top of his quill for some minutes, and taking two or three turns up and down the room, accompanying his movement by vehement gesticulations. I am also convinced that his verses are generally amatory, and addressed to no imaginary object. He often copies something out of the aforesaid book with the white parchment cover, and seals it up carefully in the form of a letter, which he always gives the postman with his own hands. Besides, when he has secured his door against intruders (ah! poor lad! how little he suspects that I see every thing that he is about) he frequently reads over and over again certain little notes (written on a fine shining paper with coloured edges, and very neatly folded up), and which he seldom fails to press repeatedly to his lips before he arrives at the end of them. As to the peculiarities of his temper, I observe by what passes between him and his father, and still more between him and a certain aunt who frequents the family, that his feelings are quick and susceptible, and that he easily takes offence. He is careless and rather harum-scarum, for he sometimes leaves the key in the secretaire, where all these precious *billet-doux* are deposited, and then suddenly recollecting his neglect, he flies up stairs to repair it in such a hurry, that I expect him every moment to break his neck by the way. He is benevolent, for he never sees a beggar without relieving him; extravagant, for he receives his allowance monthly, and it never lasts above half the time; proud and high-minded, for having applied to his father either for an increase of allowance or an advance (I could not exactly ascertain which), and receiving a refusal in the first instance, when Sempronius sent him a bank-note the next morning the youth returned it, and preferred waiting till the first of the present month. I observe, too, that he is sometimes a little out of humour without cause, in which I suppose he takes after his father: however, his ill-temper never is vented upon anything except his spaniel, whom he feeds all dinner time, and who always sleeps with his head resting upon the foot of his master.

As to his half-brother, little Willy, he is too young as yet to show much character; but I am very much mistaken if he has not a decided genius for the arts. Every morsel of paper which falls in his way is immediately covered with his inventions. If his pencil is taken from him, he hunts about till he finds a piece of coal or chalk, with which he scrawls landscapes

and figures over all the doors, walls, and tables, to the great annoyance of his order-loving mother, and of the house-maid, whose wet napkin has no sort of respect for the productions of this juvenile Sir Joshua. In a moment the effusions of his genius are effaced for ever: but in vain does his mother scold, and in vain does the housemaid scrub; he sets to work again with unabated ardour, and in defiance of these enemies of art, in a few hours the walls, doors, and tables, are as fully decorated as before.

But I must not omit the portrait of the afore-mentioned aunt, who, though not an inmate of the family, exercises over it no inconsiderable authority. From her likeness to Sempronius she must certainly be his sister, though evidently some years older: she is tall, thin, pale, and then such a nose and chin! She is almost a daily guest, and Sempronius never suffers himself to indulge his ill-humours in her society. Sempronius is a shrewd long-headed man, and minds the main chance; from the respect which he pays her I conclude that the old lady is in good circumstances, her own mistress, without children and that her brother flatters himself that either he or his offspring will hold no contemptible place in her will. Nay, I am not only persuaded that she has no children, but that the venerable lady is still a votary of Diana; which conclusion I draw, not only fromobservations made on her person and manners, but from the extreme love and intimacy which prevails between her and a large tortoise-shell cat, which generally lies basking before Cordelia's fire.

This good lady (what shall we call her? Her brother's name is Sempronius,—"Amandus he; Amanda she"—So says Sterne—Sempronia be her name then)—Sempronia then seems much attached to her brother, but Cordelia is evidently no favourite with her. She treats her with such cold and formal politeness. She so often bites her thin lips, as if desirous of repressing a scornful sneer, and which she takes good care not to repress. If she opens one of the volumes placed on Cordelia's table, she never fails to clap it down hastily, with such a shrug of the shoulders and such a shake of the head, and then such a turning up of the whites of her eyes to heaven. From the latter circumstance I am tempted to believe that the good lady has been a little bit by the Methodists. However, Cordelia considers it as beneath her to take notice of these little pieces of impertinence, and only answers the sneer of contempt with which her sister-in-law occasionally favours her by a smile of the sweetest gentleness and most heavenly forbearance. As to Edward, he and his aunt are at open enmity: three minutes of conversation with her are generally sufficient to make him throw out fire and flames; then he flies out of the room, and up go the whites of her eyes more piteously than ever.

But undoubtedly her greatest favourite in the family, I mean the greatest upon two legs, is little Willy: he holds the very next place in her good graces to the tortoise-shell cat. Of this the young rogue seems conscious; and proud of enjoying that sunshine which is bestowed upon so few, he never fails to welcome her arrival by a voluntary offering of his rosy lips, and sports and frisks about her arm-chair as merrily and as wantonly as a butterfly flutters about a honey-pot; I warrant me the good lady is seldom unprovided with a box full of sugar-plums.

Such are the persons who compose this family, and such is the knowledge which I have obtained of them during a daily observation of several months. But lately some circumstances have occurred which have excited my curiosity respecting their concerns more than usual. I have fortunately succeeded in communicating this curiosity to my uncle's bosom; he has consented to be my amanuensis; and to-morrow (he provided with plenty of ink, pens, and paper, and myself furnished with my aforesaid pocket-telescope,) it is our intention to commence an exact and systematic account of everything which passes in the house of his opposite neighbour. I am to report, and he is to register.

Having completed this introduction, which was necessary to make my readers acquainted with our *dramatis personæ*, I shall proceed to my employment—Hark!—the clock strikes ten—that is the hour at which Sempronius regularly makes his appearance at Cordelia's breakfast-table, and I hasten to post myself at—My Uncle's Garret-Window

Tuesday, May 5th, 4 o'clock.

Your new appointment of secretary, my dear uncle, is likely to be a sinecure for to-day. Cordelia and her boy are just gone into the country, and mean to pass some days there; for I saw her maid pack up two clean muslin dresses and four shifts in the chaise seat. Sempronius and his eldest son dine out: I saw the former show Edward the card of invitation, and by his pointing out a particular part of it, I conclude that he was bidding him observe the din-

ner-hour, and take care to be ready in time; for punctuality is not among the number of Edward's good qualities. However, he will not be too late to-day, for he is dressing at this moment. A hackney-coach stops at the door. Sempronius and Edward are both gone, so you may lay down your pen, my dear uncle!

Wednesday, 5 o'clock.

To-day promises to be as barren as yesterday. Sempronius has finished a solitary meal in his own study, and is now making a tooth-pick. It seems he is not very skilful, for he has already spoiled two quills, and now in a pet he throws the splinters of the third to one side of the room, and the pen-knife to the other. Deuce take the peevish old fellow! I protest his ill-temper almost makes me lose mine. I'll step up stairs and see what Edward is about.

I might as well have stayed where I was; Edward is not at home.

Look! look! the study door opens; now then we shall have something interesting p'shaw it's only the maiden aunt but this is not her usual time for visiting us and bless my heart! what a fuss the old woman seems to be in! She opens the door which communicates with Cordelia's drawing room, and looks round to see whether the coast is clear. I protest I can as little tell what to make of her mysterious proceedings as her brother, who sits there with his mouth open, his eyes staring, his brows drawn together, his hands resting on his knees, and his whole body bending forwards. He is mightily puzzled!

But now we shall get a little insight into the business. The virgin has seated herself close at his elbow, and with her nose almost running into his ear (I am sure I pity him, poor man! I should so much dislike myself to have the old cat thus near me!) she opens all the sluices of her eloquence, while her arms assist her speech with all the powers of gesticulation.

Now what can she be chattering about? Something of consequence, that is certain and of no pleasant import, that is equally sure; for Sempronius grows darker with every syllable there! he was on the point of jumping up in a rage, but his tormentor grasped him by the arm, and forcing him into his chair again, insisted upon being heard to the end; still do the symptoms of repressed passion grow stronger and stronger. Now then, ay! now the lava overflows! the man is absolutely terrific when he is really incensed, till now I had only seen him play the Jupiter Tonans, when little domestic contrarieties had occurred to put him out of his way; but his anger was merely a gentle breeze compared to his present emotions. His mind is now agitated by a tempest, a tornado, a sirocco, burning and pestilential! I never saw a man in such a passion before. Bless my soul! bless my soul! what can the old cat have been telling him?

All of a sudden he leaves off prancing about the room, stalks up to his sister's chair, and standing before her, looks her full in the face! an appeal to her conscience, no doubt; a solemn inquiry, whether all that she has been saying is not a falsehood of her own invention, the aunt is highly offended at the question, she rises with great dignity from her seat, she stretches out her yellow arm, and is going to call heaven to witness that—no; no; she points to the door leading to the staircase, and a contemptuous sneer which accompanies the action assures me that she tells Sempronius that there lies the way by which he may remove all doubts. I am right; Sempronius bounces to the door, in his impatience he cannot turn the lock; he kicks the door violently, and at length it gives way; he beckons his sister and disappears. A prayer-book has almost forced itself out of her pocket; she stops to push it back again, and then follows her brother, with her hands placed orderly before her, and the composure of a saint! Good soul! Bless my heart! what mischief can she be about! it is growing dusky; I declare I have a great mind to run down into the street, and watch for their coming out; then by dodging them unobserved, who knows but I may discover at last—stop! stop! I may spare myself the trouble, as I hope to live and breathe, the amiable pair are at this very moment in Edward's chamber.

Sempronius stands before his son's writing desk, it is fastened, but that matters little; the father has forced the lock, open flies every drawer, out flies every paper, surely no deficiency in the counting-house, no suspicious entry in his books oh! no: I have been too long intimate with Edward, and know his character and heart too well: such a thing is quite impossible; besides, Sempronius finds a purse half full and throws it aside with an air of indifference; ha! ha! now I understand him! He examines the secretaire, he suspects that there is a private drawer, yes; what he wishes to discover (ah! I could tell him where to find them!) are precisely those very things which Edward is most anxious to hide from every one. No eye has ever been suffered to see them but his own and mine these are what Sempronius wishes to

find. Mercy upon me! He has found them, the secret spring has given way; the drawer is open! And what does it contain? First comes a thick packet of letters, carefully tied together with a riband, colour sky-blue. (Have you written it down, my dear uncle? Very well!) Secondly, a nosegay, but so faded, that I cannot even guess at the flowers. Thirdly, upon my honour, nothing less than a miniature in a shagreen case! Sempronius shakes his head, and shows it to his sister; it is plain that he has never seen the original. His sister scarcely looks at it, but shrugs up her shoulders: it is equally plain that she has never seen the original either, and that the object of Edward's attachment as yet is only conjectured. Yet Sempronius does not seem the least displeased, for down goes the miniature on the floor, and away flies the poor skeleton of a nosegay out of the window. Alas! alas! for Edward, the ill-natured aunt has certainly discovered what I flattered myself was a secret only known to himself and to me; and she is now determined to take ample revenge on him for having occasionally dared to be of one opinion when she was of another.

While Sempronius is busied with the secretary, the antiquated dragon of virtue is by no means idle, she has been tossing over Edward's wardrobe for the careless youth had left the key in the lock. Her brother is now reading the letters one after another: however, their contents seem by no means to his taste, for he seldom gets through more than half a dozen lines before the paper bestrews the floor with a thousand pieces; yet still he proceeds to inspect the next. Hold! hold! Sempronia interrupts him! she has found a prize! but I cannot see anything in it which should give her so much joy; it seems to me nothing more than a plain white dimity waistcoat, which was hanging upon the arm of a chair, unconscious of harm, and meditating no treason. Ha! but the aunt has discovered an inner pocket on the left side, exactly on the place against which the heart must beat. From this Sempronia now draws forth with a look of triumph a riband ornamented with embroidery in silver. Well! I protest, I can still see no harm in the riband—Sempronia however, is not of the same opinion, for down go the remaining letters on the floor, while he seizes the riband, and examines it closely. Ha! now I comprehend! the letters were not signed; there was a doubt respecting the writer; but on the riband, the name of the giver was embroidered; though whether at length, or only the initials, I will not pretend to say; however, either has answered Miss Grimalkin's purpose, for she draws up her scraggy neck half a yard higher; while her brother's face looks like a volcano, all black and fiery, and away fly the riband and the waistcoat through the window into the street.

They fall exactly upon the head of a passenger, who, quite surprised at this unexpected salutation, stops, and disengaging his head from the waistcoat, picks up the riband, whose glittering ornaments,—may I never speak again, if it is not Edward himself!—he recognizes the precious pledge of affection: but thrown into the street! He makes but one spring to the door,—ring, ring, ring, goes the bell, an old grey-headed footman opens the door, Edward rushes in; the door closes. I see that Sempronius and his amiable sister have heard the bell ring violently, but before they had time to conjecture the cause, Edward stands before them breathless with speed and anxiety, his cheeks, burning, his eyes starting, his mouth open, and the important riband still fluttering in his hand; his spaniel too has recognised his master's property, and has dragged the white dimity waistcoat up stairs in his mouth. Edward has got no further than the door; there he stands like a statue, as if petrified by the sight of the two arch-foes of his love, while the fragments of the letters strewn on the floor leave him no doubt, that the repository of his dearest secret has been violated.

"Walk in, young gentleman, pray, walk in; we shall be very glad of your company!" cries the father: not that I hear a syllable; but nothing can be more expressive of sarcastic politeness than the frequent bowing of his head, and the waving his hand backwards and forwards, while his lips quiver and his eyes flame. And now he points to the miniature as a proof, which puts the case out of doubt.

And how does Edward look? like some miserable sinner, surprised *in flagranti*? not he, truly the first thing he does is to seize the mis-used picture, and press it to his heart, as if anxious to make atonement for its having been treated so unworthily; and now he advances towards his father, slowly but firmly, and with humility but not meanness, takes his hand, and raises it affectionately to his lips.

Now if I were Sempronius, this submissive action would go a great way towards softening *my heart: I should* find it very difficult to remain quite as angry as I intended. But whether

he is himself conscious of this effect, and is afraid of giving way to his own weakness, or whether he is ashamed of yielding so soon, and before a witness who would not fail to upbraid him for his folly, whatever be the cause, it is certain, that Edward's humility has not produced the desired effect on the contrary Sempronius seems to be more incensed than before; and repulsing his son with violence, the sudden movement makes him strike his hand against the lips, which were in the act of kissing it. Edward starts back hastily and covers his mouth with his handkerchief; but he endeavours in vain to conceal the blood which gushes from his bruised lips: the cambric is dyed with crimson. This sight rouses even old grimalkin's sensibility; she looks alarmed and places herself between them, while she grasps her brother by the arm.

And now, instead of being Sempronius, if I were Edward, I would stand boldly on the consciousness of my good intentions, and collecting the whole firmness of my character, I would tell the choleric old man, "And yet, in spite of this ill-usage, I still kiss in spirit with sincere affection the hand which repulses me so unkindly. Yes, I avow it! and my only fault is, that I did not avow it sooner; a virtuous maiden possesses my whole heart; I love her, and shall love her while I live. Here is her portrait; but it is painted here"—and then I'd point to my heart—"in colours never to be effaced. Perhaps you will disapprove of my attachment at first; but only become acquainted with her merits, and I am certain of obtaining your consent. Nay; I should be certain of it even at this moment, if, instead of tearing her letters, you could but have had patience to read them through."

Now I'd wager my pocket telescope, which at this moment is invaluable, against the old goose-quill with which you are writing, my dear uncle, that as soon as the blood would permit him to speak, Edward said these very words, or at least something very like them. He showed the miniature, he pointed to his heart, and afterwards to the letters, he clasped his hands together, and raised his eyes to heaven with a look of such enthusiasm, while attesting the perfections of his mistress. Upon my word, I did not give the hot-headed youth credit for so much temper and good sense.

Sempronius exercises his only talent: he fumes and storms, and stalks about the room, and curses and swears, and calls heaven and hell to witness: while the good lady sister, having completed her benevolent work, sits by the window and looks into the street, quite unconcerned, and as if she had nothing at all to do with the business.

So much the better; now that her venomous tongue is at rest, the storm begins to slacken. Sempronius walks backwards and forwards in silence for some minutes. Now he stands still, and leans against the wall with his fore finger extended upon his cheek, as if buried in profound thought; he has come to a decision; he advances towards his son, and——Heaven be thanked! then paternal affection still lives in his bosom, for of his own accord he offers his hand to Edward. Edward springs forward eagerly to grasp it. But hold! Sempronius draws it back, and the forefinger of it repeatedly moving upwards and downward assures me that he is laying down the conditions upon which Edward may be restored again to favour.

Edward starts back; he stands motionless; his eye burns; he seems to struggle against his feelings: if Sempronius were not his father, I should expect to see the youth turn his back upon him with contempt. In short, he looks to me exactly, as if the terms of peace just proposed had been "an absolute renunciation of the maiden in question, and for ever!" I am certainly right, for at length Edward has recovered the power of speech. He places one hand upon his heart; he raises the other to heaven with an air of the most determined resolution; and with every word which he utters his courage and his enthusiasm appear to increase. But he is not suffered to speak long. The tempest again rages; Sempronius interrupts his son with a fresh burst of thunder; and now that the fire is rekindled, the rattlesnake in petticoats takes care to throw in a word or two, as she looks over her shoulder towards the disputants, and kindly prevents the flame from being extinguished a second time.

The Lord be praised! this embarrassing scene at length is concluded. Sempronius's passion on a sudden gives place to the most frozen composure: he spreads his arms out widely, and with a shrug of the shoulders and a slight inclination of the head, he pronounces a single decisive sentence, and quits the room. Edward turns pale; he looks as if he could scarcely credit his hearing, and remains like one thunderstruck. Can you possibly guess, my dear uncle, what it was that Sempronius said at parting, and which produced so strong an effect? For my own part, I am completely puzzled.

The aunt, however, does not think proper to make her retreat at present. No; she is preparing to give her nephew a long lecture; for she turns her chair round, clears her throat i. her pocket-handkerchief, smooths her petticoats, and takes a pinch of snuff. Now then she begins.

She might spare her breath, for Edward does not hear a syllable: he seems totally absorbed in his own gloomy reflections. The virgin might have talked on till dooms-day uninterrupted by him, if she had not unadvisedly taken it into her head to pick up the fragments of one of the letters, which accident had thrown at her feet; and now as proof of the facts advanced in her discourse, she proceeds to read the letter aloud with a sneering look and theatrical action. The well known words give Edward the alarm; he awakens from his lethargy. This unwarrantable intrusion into the secrets of his heart, this scornful treatment both of his mistress and himself, at once restores his presence of mind. He springs forward, snatches the paper from her hands, and throwing his arms around her, bears her swiftly, but without roughness, to the landing place. She evidently resists; her open mouth assures me that she protests loudly against this involuntary exit: but she is already on the wrong side of the threshold. Edward closes and bolts the door, and my eyes behold no longer this model of feminine perfection!

My grief for this loss, however, is but of short duration; she bounces into her brother's study, and renews her attacks upon him with increased zeal. Sempronius has seated himself at his writing-desk; he has written two notes, and in one of them (which was very short) he now encloses a parcel of bank-bills: he rings the bell and sends the old grey-headed servant out with the other. The aunt continues talking without repose, but she gets no answer. Sempronius walks up and down the room, silent, and gloomy, and without attending to her; he seems impatient for the messenger's return.

The domestic is come back—he receives the other note with its inclosure, and retires a second time; but in a minute after I see Edward undraw the bolt of his door, and the servant enters; probably, the good old man guesses the contents of the note, for while he delivers it, he turns away his head, and the back of his hand passing over his eyes, rapidly appears to be wiping away tears.

The unfortunate lover receives the note with a firm countenance; but his resolution only lasts till he has perused the contents; the letter falls from his trembling hand; his arms drop powerless by his side; he rests his head against the frame of the window: he seems totally absorbed in the bitterness of his sensations.

The old domestic opens a closet-door, and draws forth a moderate sized trunk: undesired, he proceeds to pack up the contents of a wardrobe, and of a chest of drawers. Alas! alas! poor Edward! now then I know the decision of your unyielding father! The punishment pronounced upon you for possessing a feeling heart, eyes for beauty, and sympathy for worth, is nothing less than banishment from your paternal mansion.

The trunk is packed and corded, and now with a countenance expressive of the deepest melancholy the old man offers Edward the key. Edward sees him not, hears him not, heeds him not, till he feels his right hand moistened with tears—he starts from his lethargy—he looks down--the venerable servant kneels at his feet; he has clasped the hand of his young master in both of his, and presses his lips upon it. Edward compels him to rise, and shakes the old man by the hand heartily and kindly—he takes the parcel of notes from the floor, and selecting one, gives it to his old attendant; but the servant looks at it with a melancholy smile, shakes his head, lays it upon the writing desk, and hiding his face with both his hands, he quits the apartment.

Edward now proceeds to examine his papers. Some of them are fastened together again with the afore-mentioned blue riband, and deposited in his bosom—with the rest he fills his pockets indiscriminately; the bank-notes are placed in a small red morocco case, and confided to his waistcoat—the spaniel frisks around the table, and every now and then I hear him bark joyously: probably he is aware that his master prepares to go out, and for his part, he is quite ready to be of the party. But his gaiety makes a singular contrast with his master's melancholy.

Hark!—a post-chaise comes rattling up the street!—It stops before Sempronius's house—the door is already open: the postillion dismounts; he and the old servant are now in *Edward's room*, and carry out the trunk between them!—What, then, my poor friend Edward,

am I quite to lose you?—Will your severe father not even suffer you to breathe the same air with him?—Now, by my soul, my heart bleeds for you!

The trunk is tied on—the postillion is on his horse—the chaise-step is let down—the old servant appears again in Edward's room—Edward starts up, and follows him, evidently making a violent effort to tear himself away; but when he reaches the door, he stops, and turns to take a melancholy farewell-look of that chamber, which perhaps he has inhabited even from his earliest years, where he has passed so many happy and so many bitter hours, where he has so often smiled and so often wept, which he now quits, and probably for ever!—He draws his hat down over his eyes, and as he passes the threshold I can see his knees tremble!—Alas! poor youth! with a broken heart do you quit your father's dwelling; it seems, that even to say farewell to your stern judge is forbidden you!—Oh! suffer with patience; suffer with firmness; preserve your good heart pure from every too bitter reflection upon him, who, harsh as he is, is still your parent. He has ceased to act as a father, but never forget that you are a son.

I am too much grieved by Edward's departure to attend with any patience to the amiable pair in the study below; they may do what they please, for I will not honour them at present with my attention. Therefore, my dear uncle, you may lay down your pen for to-day; into the bargain, in half an hour more it will be too dark for me to——

'Sit down again! sit down again, my dear uncle! Edward is not yet gone! At this moment he stands before his mother's picture, which (as I told you formerly) hangs over the sofa in Cordelia's sitting room—his eyes are rooted upon those beloved features—"Ah! mother!" methinks I hear him say, "it is well for you that you sleep in the grave! It is well that you are not here to see your only son banished from the house and heart of his father, and to kiss away these tears, which you would surely mingle with your own! Perhaps, were you still alive, all this would not happen; perhaps you would fold your arms round the son, who to-day is thrown out upon the wide world without shelter, and then, when my father heard the prayers of an agonized mother pleading for her only child—oh! were you but alive, my mother!—were not your place now filled by a stranger!"

No, no! these last sentences Edward did not say—I wrong his justice; he is not so ungrateful for all Cordelia's kindness; for, see! he fastens the silver-embroidered riband round an alabaster vase, which stands on Cordelia's chimney-piece; doubtless he wishes to convince his step-mother that he thought of her at parting, and has bequeathed her this precious gift of love as a silent memorial of his undiminished friendship—oh! she will certainly find your legacy, poor Edward, and her own feeling heart will interpret to her the intentions and the sentiments of yours; she will often think of you while absent, will labour incessantly to effect your return; and while Cordelia remains there, you will not be quite forgotten within the dwelling of your father.

Again he turns to his mother's picture, near it hangs a small sketch of it in Indian ink, the production of Willy's all-imitating pencil; it is drawn upon a sheet of letter-paper, and fastened against the wall with a pin, thus (with the true vanity of a youthful artist) boldly challenging a comparison with the original. There are a thousand defects in the drawing; but even from hence I can see that he has succeeded in catching the resemblance. Edward eagerly snatches the paper from its place, and then having pressed his lips with pious enthusiasm upon the frame of the picture, he hastens from the apartment as abruptly as if he dreaded lest his father should appear, and deprive him of his newly-found treasure.

Edward is in the chaise—the post-boy flourishes his whip—Edward is gone!

'Friday morning.

I have nicked the very moment: Cordelia's chaise stands before the door, and the old servant and the maid are busy in taking out the seat, and several parcels. The drawing-room door opens, and gay as a lark little Willy comes jumping into the chamber. His mother then cannot be far off. He carries a roll of paper under his arm, as black and smoky as if it were a manuscript dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum; he unrolls it and holds up the contents to admire their reflection in the looking-glass. Now I understand what makes the boy seem so proud and so happy: at the house where he has been visiting, he discovered two old coloured prints, one representing a battle, and the other a hunting-match; and his good-natured host has gratified the future Raphael by making him a present of them both. Well, Willy, this is a treasure indeed!

But see! his mother makes her appearance—the old domestic follows her. Ah! then she has already heard of Edward's banishment; I could swear it by her pale countenance and dejected air. Without taking off her pelisse, she walks slowly towards the sofa, seats herself upon it, and leaning her arm upon the table and her cheek against her hand, she seems buried in thoughts evidently of no pleasant nature—she now addresses a few short questions to the servant; his answers are equally brief—he is dismissed and Willy is ordered to accompany him.

Cordelia is now alone—she sits with her hands clasped, her eyes fixed upon the carpet. Now she raises them to heaven as if she uttered a mental prayer, and then wipes away a tear. Ah! her husband has long accustomed her to the expression of this silent grief—she rises, and paces up and down the chamber with an absent look; now her eye rests upon the flower vase, round which the embroidered riband is fastened!—she stops—she seems to be endeavouring to recollect where she had seen it before—she unties it, and while she reads the silver characters, a melancholy smile plays on her pale cheeks, and she shakes her head dejectedly. Now she unlocks a small japanned cabinet, in which she is accustomed to keep her most valuable ornaments, and in one of the drawers of which she deposits the embroidered riband—now suddenly she closes the cabinet, locks it, and conceals the key in her pocket.

The door opens—Sempronius enters. Oh! then she had heard him coming up stairs. He has a pen stuck behind his ear, and probably is just come out of his counting-house (I suppose that it is in the back part of the house) to welcome his wife on her return home. The visit, however, does not seem to be quite to his taste; he looks like a schoolboy, who has committed some fault and expects to be scolded by his tutor. The first compliments are over, and the interview becomes quite comical; he evidently does not well know how to begin the relation of what has occurred during her absence, and she for her part does not seem at all inclined to give him the least assistance. They are both silent; he hums, and haws, and scrapes the carpet with his feet, and sits by no means comfortably upon his chair. Bravo! how unusually polite the man is grown! he insists upon helping Cordelia to take off her pelisse, the pelisse is folded up, and yet the conversation does not get on; Sempronius walks to the window, and draws one of the Venetian blinds quite up. Thank you, good sir! it was very much in my way, but now I can see what you are about much better; he picks up a knitting needle, which had fallen on the floor; he looks out of window, and beats time against the frame with his fingers; now he walks to the fire-place, and sets his watch by a small chamber-clock which stands upon the mantel-piece: the clock is out of order, and has not gone for these nine days to my certain knowledge.

But Cordelia, whose gentle heart cannot bear to see any human being suffer, however deservedly, now relieves him from his painful embarrassment; she rises from the sofa, with a look at once expressing the most friendly interest and the most dignified reproach, she clasps the hand of her husband, she leads him back to the sofa, and places him before the portrait of his deceased wife; there is something so noble, so exalted in her look and attitude, that she appears to me like a superior being! how clearly does her countenance express that she says at this moment to her husband, "Could yonder lips now say to you, 'Thou harsh father, where is my son?'—To such a question, what answer could you make?"

He fixes his eyes on the ground; he dares not look upon the face either of the inanimate mother of his child, or of her living representative.

And now the excellent woman implores him not to be cruel to his son and to himself, while she gives unrestricted course to her tears, and while she endeavours to awaken his feelings by caresses, which express the most heartfelt interest and good will, and can Sempro- possibly resist her entreaties?

No, no! it would have been impossible, if he were not already so very much in the wrong; he feels that to give way at all, would now be to confess that in the whole affair his harshness had been inexcusable; false shame prevents his retracting the sentence which he ought never to have pronounced. Unless Edward were declared to be an undutiful son, he should be tacitly proved to be himself the most unnatural of fathers. He therefore wilfully hardens *his heart* and blinds his judgment, in order to escape from the conviction of his error, and he *now begins a long* and animated narrative of all that has passed. Oh! how I wish that I were

at his elbow, in order that I might set him right occasionally in point of historical fact, if it were only for the love which I bear his good lady sister, who, if I had the management of the brush, should not be painted in this family picture in colours too flattering.

Sempronius's narrative has not produced the desired effect upon his wife, but at least he has contrived to talk himself once more into a persuasion that everything which he has done has been perfectly proper. It was visible how his importance and self-satisfaction increased with every succeeding period, for the longer he talked, the redder grew his face and the more violent his action; at first his only object was to conceal, under an appearance of resentment, how much Cordelia's representations had affected him; but he has succeeded in working himself up into a real fury, which has now got such complete possession of his mind as even to make him unjust towards Cordelia. Her tears which stream afresh—the sudden glow which flushes her pale cheeks—the look of mild reproach, which she casts upon her accuser, and which declares herself fully justified before the tribunal of her conscience—all these circumstances can have no reference, except to some severe reproof which Sempronius, in the violence of his passion, has just pronounced against his admirable wife. Perhaps he accuses her of countenancing his son in his disobedience, perhaps she has been long the confidante of Edward's love affair, perhaps she is acquainted with the maiden in question, and it was through her means that her step-son first formed an acquaintance which, according to Sempronius's view of the business, threatens to overturn that prosperity and respectability which he has been labouring all his life to establish. Whatever be the fault laid to Cordelia's charge, at least her husband ceases to reproach her with it for the present. The church clock stikes—I suppose that it reminds him that it is time for him to go to the Exchange, for he quits the room abruptly, and bangs the door after him with such violence that he makes all the windows rattle. Business also calls me away myself, therefore farewell, my dear uncle, till after dinner.

Friday afternoon.

Sempronius dines at four; the meal to-day has been unusually short. It is not yet five, and Sempronius has already shut himself up alone in his study, a certain sign that he is still out of temper. Ah! Cordelia is never out of temper. With a resigned melancholy air she is seated at her piano-forte. A small upright book is open before her; to judge by its dark blue cover, and by the small proportion which the music bears to the words printed at the bottom, I suspect that she is singing something out of the Edinburgh edition of "Scotch Melodies;" probably some plaintive air, which accords with the present disposition of her thoughts. At least the slow movement of her fingers, the expression of her countenance, and her head reclining a little (but only a little) towards her left shoulder, convince me that she must be playing an adagio.

A girl enters with a band-box. Surely I have seen her face before. Oh! now I recollect her; she carries out parcels for the milliner, who lives a few doors further down the street. She opens her band-box; but Cordelia shakes her head. It seems that she wants nothing of that kind at present; but when refused in so gentle a manner, why should the girl look so frightened? She casts a look of apprehension round her..... Hey-day!—she has suddenly snatched a letter out of her band-box, thrown it into Cordelia's lap, and now she runs down stairs ready to break her neck. The ambassadress must know but little of Cordelia, if she supposes that she will receive a letter, which reaches her by so mysterious a conveyance. Accordingly she has already quitted the piano-forte in pursuit of the fugitive—the letter has fallen on the ground, and.....but softly! she stops suddenly with her hand resting upon the lock of the door. The letter which now lies on the carpet has caught her eye; she certainly must have recognized some well-known hand-writing.

She has!—she springs towards the letter, seizes it eagerly, and conceals it in her bosom, while a deep crimson overspreads her face. She now opens the other door opposite to that by which the milliner left her; probably it leads to her bed-chamber, which is in the back part of the house; the door closes, and I see Cordelia no longer.

What can be the meaning of all this? Surely I know Cordelia too well to.....Is it possible that I should have formed an erroneous opinion of her character and principles? Nay, if I find myself deceived here in my notions of female virtue, I will never look for it elsewhere.

Ha! I begin to fear that the mystery will be unravelled in the most disagreeable manner.

The staircase door is thrown open, and Sempronia makes her appearance, and hands into the room (not very gently or politely I must confess) the milliner's apprentice! The venerable virgin seems to be in a great heat! What has happened? I suppose she met the girl on the stairs; and if she was hurrying down them as quick as she bolted out of the drawing-room, no wonder if she excited suspicion in the fair bosom of Miss Grimalkin, who, I warrant, has brought her back, in order that she might examine her quite at her ease.

The examination is not a very quiet one. Our dearly beloved aunt is somewhat more violent than becomes a grand inquisitor; and the supposed culprit does not seem to want for spirit. Now they both talk together. If I were not so intimately acquainted with the affairs of this family, I should think that Sempronius had imported two fish-wives from Billingsgate.

The music of these two nightingales has attracted the notice of the master of the house, and he leaves his study to enjoy it more distinctly. He inquires the cause of all this uproar; but the ladies talk on without listening to him. Sempronia examines the band-box; the milliner with sarcastic politeness turns out the contents of her pockets, and begs the virgin to convince herself that there is nothing concealed in her thimble and a silver nutmeg-grater. Now the storm rages more violently than ever, till Sempronius bursts out like a clap of thunder, and terrifies them both into silence. He menaces the girl with his finger. He points down the street. Ay, I suppose he threatens her with a complaint to her mistress, for she begins to look uneasy, keeps edging away towards the door, and at last appears to have considerable satisfaction in being permitted to make her escape in a whole skin.

Sempronia, however, seems more martially inclined than ever since the retreat of the enemy. She proceeds to harangue with the most violent action, heedless of her brother's impatience, while he walks up and down the room, but on a sudden he stands still, and stares her full in the face, while his countenance expresses the greatest dismay and astonishment. Some important word has escaped her, which evidently has touched the master-string of his whole united sensibilities. She, too, seems considerably embarrassed at the hardy assertion which has just fallen from her. She is silent; but now she makes up her mind. She strikes her right hand closed against the open palm of her left with a look of diabolical determination, and then seizing her brother's arm, draws him back again into his study, and shuts the door.

The secret which she is now disclosing is clearly no trifle. How uneasy, how gloomy seems Sempronius! Now he starts from his chair, opens the door leading to the drawing-room, looks in to ascertain that nobody is there, then enters, and motions to his sister to follow him; the sweet creature does not require to be told twice. They approach Cordelia's writing desk; it is unlocked—now shame upon him! He is examining the pens to see whether they have been used lately; while his worthy sister inspects the inkstand in hopes of discovering some fallen drops upon the brink of it, and feels whether there is any remaining warmth to be perceived in the sealing-wax.

They have made no discoveries, and are now returning to the study. Sempronius, however, comes back to the writing-table, and counts the sheets of paper, in order that, if his wife should carry on any correspondence unknown to him, the deficiency of a sheet may apprize him of the fact. Ah! my worthy friend, how richly do you deserve the fate of which you are so apprehensive.

I am tired of this tête-à-tête. Is nothing to be discovered in the other apartments? Stay, did I tell you, my dear uncle, that there is an old lumber-room which joins Edward's forsaken bed-chamber? As nobody ever enters this place, except to store away empty boxes or useless furniture, Willy is here secure from interruption, and has accordingly selected it for his painting-room. Here he passes hour after hour in scratching and daubing, and here he is established at this very moment. The two coloured prints are stretched against the wall, and he often suspends his work to gaze in admiration upon the gorgeous assemblage of reds, and blues, and greens, and yellows; an assemblage, however, which he is unable to rival in his present performance; for he has emptied all his shells of paint, and has no better resource than the inkstand.

The work is complete. He seems to be mightily pleased with it. He opens the window and holds the piece of paper out of it, waving it backwards and forwards, in order that the ink, which he has not spared, may dry in the open air the sooner. If he would but turn him-

self ever so little more to the right, I should be able to favour him with my opinion of his performance. That will do, my little friend. Upon my word, very clever. I never saw a more striking resemblance! 'Tis the aunt's profile, and as ugly as life. There is no mistaking it; not a wrinkle about the corners of her little fiery eyes is omitted; the twist of her nose is hit off to a nicety, and the falling in of her toothless mouth (though perhaps rather overdone) is excellently preserved; nay, he has not forgotten even the great wart with which her chin is decorated. To be sure it is not a flattering one, but the portrait is the very counterpart of nature in all her undisguised deformity. But what can have induced the young rogue to employ his pencil, or rather his pen, on such an unpromising subject? This is the first caricature that I ever saw him attempt; and if it should fall into the hands of the original, I am afraid that the painter's reward would by no means be of the most satisfactory nature.

He still stands before the window, and seems to be holding forth to himself. He uses a great deal of stiff action, as if he was repeating a speech out of a play. He stops, and appears embarrassed. Now he takes a book from the table, looks into it, sets it upright and open against the window, and proceeds again in his recitation with renewed spirit. I think I can make out a G and an F. Stay, oh, I see—'Gay's Fables.' Every now and then he stops, and looks anxiously up the street; 'tis by that way that his aunt always comes, and this is about the time that she usually pays her evening visit.

I have it, I have it; he has some favour to ask of his aunt, and hopes to bribe her to grant it by repeating a newly-acquired fable of Gay, and by showing her that he has past the time of her absence in retracing her beloved resemblance. Oh, poor Willy, I fear that if such is your intention, your portrait will be thought much too like to be pleasing. It seems, by his looking so often into the street, he is not aware that Sempronia has been in the house above this half-hour.

He begins to suspect it, for he puts his drawing into his pocket, gives a parting look to his tawdry prints, takes up the box containing the empty colour-shells, and away he goes. The empty colour-shells? There, then, we have the key of the whole mystery. He is ambitious of making a picture all red and yellow, like his favourite prints; but his colour-shells must first be replenished, and this, then, is the favour, to obtain which he has given himself so much trouble.

Cordelia has just returned to the drawing-room. She is already gone again. She only looked at a card which was stuck over the mantel-piece, took a key from a bunch which was in the drawer of her writing-table, and immediately left the room with it.

Willy has entered the drawing-room. He has heard his aunt's voice in the adjoining closet, for he advances towards it. Probably the tone is not encouraging, for he hesitates, and opens the door softly, and by degrees, in order to reconnoitre the field of action, before he commences the attack. Sempronius looks as black as a live lobster, and his sister as red as a boiled one. Willy seems not to admire the appearance of either, and draws his little curly head back again; but his aunt is already aware of the young spy's vicinity, and before he can effect a retreat she has taken him into custody. Now, then, placing him between her knees, and compelling him to look her full in the face (how can she be so barbarous?) she insists upon his making an exact confession. Perhaps she suspects that his mother had sent him to overhear what she was saying to Sempronius.

The poor child weeps, and protests his innocence. Now she loses all patience, and drags him by the arm to the window, which she opens. What! is she threatening to throw him out of it, unless he instantly confesses himself guilty? No, no; not so bad as that; she is only going to bring forward a proof of the truth of her charge so convincing that there can be no denying it. She points to the story above; she holds a sheet of paper out of the window, and waves it, just as Willy did the portrait. She saw him then, and probably thought that he was making signs to somebody in the street. Did she take the paper for a letter? Perhaps, too, for one written by his mother. Was there ever such a lynx in petticoats! I am half afraid that her keen eyes will discover me with my telescope at the Garret-Window, and then I shall be suspected to be the lover in this romance. Fortunately, this business can be easily explained. Don't be so frightened, my little friend, you need only put your hand in your left pocket, and your deceiver will be confounded.

And that is exactly what he does. With trembling hands he draws forth the last production of his genius. She opens it eagerly; nay, there is certainly no mistaking the subject; and now, Willy, now!—there's a glorious subject for your pencil! Le Brun's 'Passions' exhibit nothing to be compared with it. Unluckily she does not allow him time to study her. To tear the paper into a thousand pieces—to apply so hearty a slap on his cheek as left five white marks behind it—seize him by the arm, and turn him out of the room, slapping the door in his face—was the work of but a single minute. The unfortunate little artist retires sobbing, to mourn over the annihilation of all his air-built castles.

The closet-conference, too, is at an end. Our beloved aunt has done all the mischief in her power, sees no prospect of doing more at present, and therefore takes her departure quite satisfied with herself.

I assure you, my dear uncle, I do not like the look of this business at all. Cordelia went out just as the postman was going through the street; she sent the old footman back for something, and seized the moment of his absence to give a letter into the postman's care; there was a hurry in her manner of giving it, and she coloured so suddenly and so deeply, that I am certain there was some mystery in the business. In all probability this letter was an answer to that which she received from the milliner. I begin to grow very uneasy; it is at least certain that Cordelia carries on a correspondence, unknown to her husband, with some person in London, for it was not the general post by which the letter was forwarded.

Sempronius is still alone in his own room; he seems in a brown study; sometimes he walks up and down the chamber rubbing his forehead with his hand thoughtfully; sometimes he beats the devil's tattoo, sitting in his elbow chair. At this moment he is playing upon the table with his fingers, but evidently without attending to what he is about.

Hark! a kneck at his door! What! Sempronia returned so soon? It is very unusual for her to make two visits in one evening. What an air of triumph she wears! She must have done some notable mischief, she looks so happy. She puts me in mind at this moment of her prototype Milton's Serpent—

——"Hope elevates, and joy
Brightens her crest."——

The door opens; she goes in, but her companion remains in the street. Surely I have seen that fellow's face before; as I hope to live, the very postman to whom Cordelia confided her letter! He is trying a piece of money with his teeth! A bribe, no doubt, and if the fellow received it from Sempronia—alas! for poor Cordelia's secret.

The aunt throws open the study door, and with a look of exultation slaps down a letter upon the table before her brother. He seizes it; he recognises the hand-writing. I think I can see his hands tremble while he bursts the letter open.

Ha! something has fallen upon the ground, which Sempronia possesses herself of without loss of time. She holds it up triumphantly to her brother. A key? Can it be that which I saw Cordelia even now take off the ring? The same idea has struck the amiable pair, for they are already in the drawing-room. The bunch of keys is in the hands of Sempronius. The look of anguish with which he lets the bunch fall again, tells me too plainly that it is that very key.

Sempronia urges him to read the letter. To judge by his countenance, matters are now worse than ever. The note could have contained but a few words, for it was read in an instant; and if his sister had not stopped him in time, in another instant he would have torn it into a thousand pieces.

I suppose the postman is impatient, for he has just sent the maid-servant up with a message; she is gone down again with a small wax light in her hand, which usually stands upon the chimney-piece. Sempronia picks up the bunch of keys and replaces them in the drawer. She takes the letter from her brother and examines it; she points to the superscription with an inquiring look; he shakes his head. No, he knows nothing of the person to whom the letter is addressed. Cordelia in secret correspondence with a person of whom her husband knows nothing! That looks very ill; and yet that person may be a woman. Come, my dear uncle, let us believe the best; when there are two sides of the question, I always prefer the most favourable; and to think an accused person in the right till he is

actually proved to be in the wrong, if not the most prudent plan as the world is constituted, at least is certainly the most amiable.

The maid returns with the wax taper lighted; the letter is sealed again with one of Cordelia's own seals, which lay on the writing table. Now, then, away stalks Sempronia; she restores the letter to the perfidious postman, who bows and leaves her; and now a corner of the street deprives my eyes of the pleasure of gazing upon this paragon of female chastity.

What do you think of all this, my dear uncle? That cursed key! I am horribly afraid that it was the key of some private entrance, of some back door, or garden gate, and that the note specified the hour and day for using it; it could not have contained more, from the short time occupied by its perusal. If this conjecture be just, Sempronius is as well informed of these particulars as either the writer or receiver of the letter; and by his sending it to its destination, I conclude that he means the assignation to be kept. Is it his intention to surprise Cordelia with her unknown correspondent? It looks very like it.

At any rate, I hope that this important interview is not fixed for this evening, as business (which cannot be delayed) compels me to desert my post this very moment, and will prevent my resuming it till to-morrow; therefore, my dear uncle, I must beg you to supply my place. I will leave you my telescope—keep a sharp look-out, and then I shall at least have the satisfaction of learning, from your report to-morrow, everything which has taken place in Sempronius's family during my absence.

Saturday.

And so, my dear uncle, you are quite certain that I lost nothing by my absence yesterday evening? Nothing occurred worth noticing? Well then, let me see whether I can have better success in my discoveries.

Hey-day! the old footman is at the door, adjusting the stirrups of a little grey poney, and Sempronius is in the very act of drawing on his boots; he seems preparing to go a journey. Well, then, this cannot possibly be the important day, for so well informed as Sempronius is of the time of the assignation, he certainly would take care not to be out of the way; and that he does not mean to return to-night I conclude from his carrying saddle-bags.

However, he does not leave Cordelia's "fair side all unguarded,"* for his she-dragon of a sister is just arrived, and her maid follows her, carrying a bundle of clothes. Cordelia's maid appears, and the she-dragon's abigail is given in charge to her, so that I conjecture the sister-in-law is appointed to keep a strict eye over Cordelia's conduct till her brother returns. Methinks Cordelia does not seem quite pleased with this arrangement, though she strives to hide her dissatisfaction under the veil of civilities.

N.B. The she-dragon's abigail is almost as old, and quite as hideous, as her mistress—to make her more so was out of the power of Nature.

Sempronius is gone. Cordelia is busied with household affairs. Our dearly beloved aunt has fixed her spectacles on her hawk's nose, and is knitting away as if her existence depended upon it. This day will probably be unproductive, but I will just look in upon you in the evening, my dear uncle.

Saturday afternoon.

Cordelia is more ornamented than usual; she has a turban on, with a sultana plume, which becomes her singularly. Willy, too, has got his best clothes on—there is certainly something in the wind; his mother is reading to him out of the large Shakspeare, which I mentioned before, but she finds it difficult to make him attend to her; he jumps up every minute and runs to look out at the window.

A quarter past six. Stay!—have the goodness to hand me that newspaper, my dear uncle. Let me see——"Drury Lane—'The Honey-moon.'"——"Covent Garden—'Macbeth.'" As sure as fate they are going to see 'Macbeth,' and Cordelia is trying to make her boy understand the story before they set out.

Just so. A plain, decent-looking coach, with two ladies and a gentleman in it, has just stopped at Cordelia's door. Cordelia takes her gloves and fan; she seems through civility to press her sister-in-law to join their party. How Miss Grimalkin turns up the white of her eyes! aye, I warrant her, she looks upon a theatre as an invention of the wicked one, and would as soon set her foot in purgatory as in a play-house. Cordelia and Willy leave

* Comus.

her, and she ejaculates something as the door closes, but whether it be a prayer or a curse I will not pretend to decide—for charity's sake we will believe the latter.

The coach is gone, and I may as well go too. There is nobody at home but Sempronia, and to the shame of my taste be it spoken, I have not the least inclination for a *tête-à-tête* with her. Good night, my dear uncle.

Saturday, ten o'clock.

No wonder, my dear uncle, that you are surprised at my returning so unexpectedly; but, would you believe it? as I was on my way home, even now, a man passed me, whom, in spite of his being muffled up in his great coat, and having drawn his hat down over his eyes, I recognized for Sempronius.

I instantly turned and followed him. He stopped at his own house, and struck thrice with a pebble the drawing-room window, in which there was a light. Instantly the light disappeared; in a minute after the door was opened without noise; the candle in her hand showed me the figure of Sempronia. Her brother stole into the house without speaking, and the door was closed again, as softly as it had been opened.

Then this is the important moment, after all. Cordelia looked at an invitation card—don't you recollect that circumstance? She was aware that her husband was engaged to pass a day in the country, and appointed the evening of it for her assignation. He, on his side, was aware of her arrangement, and pretended to keep his country engagement, in order that he might surprise her with her lover.

Poor, poor, Cordelia! To be sure her imprudence is highly blameable, but still .... if she could but escape this once undiscovered, who knows but the recollection of her danger might induce her to reform altogether? Stay! stay! cannot I—Hang me if I don't warn her.

Eleven o'clock.

I was too late—the play was over. Cordelia was gone—and I am returned fatigued to death.

See, see! Cordelia sits in her drawing-room. Nay, to warn her now without making a tremendous bustle, would be impossible. She must take her chance. Poor, poor Cordelia!

What is she about? She takes papers out of a red morocco case which were deposited in her jewel-box; they seem to be bank-notes. Surely she cannot be meditating an elopement? She seals them up, and leaves the room.

Sempronia is not to be seen, nor her brother. The servants are gone to bed. Everything seems to be dark and still in the house. Surely that confounded key was not the key of her bed-chamber? Such an imprudence would be quite unpardonable, especially as her bed-chamber is in the back part of the house, where I cannot see what goes forward.

Now would I give all that I am worth in the world (it would not be paying a very high price, heaven knows!) to ascertain what Sempronius is about at this moment! I warrant him he stands in some corner unobserved, just as I am doing, as attentive with his ears as I am with my eyes, listening for that which he is afraid to hear, and every instant in danger of betraying himself by the loud and anxious beating of his heart. Ah! if I am right in this conjecture, in spite of all his faults, I can't help pitying the poor miserable devil!

Ha! how is this? A faint ray of light plays upon the glass of the lumber-room windows. This is very unusual. What can any person want at such a time of night in this desolate apartment, which hardly any one enters even during the day? Can it be Willy, whose zeal for the fine arts has induced him to leave his bed at midnight to prosecute his studies unknown to the family? No! the shadow thrown upon the side wall is of too great a length to be Willy's. The person who carries the light throws it on different parts of the chamber, as if examining whether it is already occupied by any one. Can it be Cordelia in this solitary apartment—so late at night—her husband supposed at a distance—expecting some one to whom she sent a private key——Oh! if it is Cordelia, she must be guilty!

Guilty! guilty! I could discover in the shadow the peculiar form of the turban and of the sultana plume, with which it was decorated; they were marked out most distinctly. It is she; it is Cordelia! No, never again will I pin my faith upon a woman's virtue!

The door has been left a-jar, purposely I suppose, lest the lover should make a noise in opening it. I can see a faint light advancing along the landing-place. From the circular form of the radiance, I should imagine that it is produced by a dark lantern. Now it enters

the room, and shows me the tall figure of a man wrapped up in a great coat. It seems, too, that Cordelia's maid is in her mistress's secrets, for the stranger is accompanied by a female, whose height, shape, and white petticoats perfectly answer the description of Mrs Betty.

Cordelia's rushlight is too near the window, and the beams of the dark-lantern are both too feeble and too far off to permit my distinguishing the emotions, produced by this mysterious meeting, on the countenances of the lovers, not to mention that the gentleman's round hat shades a great part of his features, and that the lady's back is turned directly towards me; however, the eagerness with which Cordelia hastens to meet the stranger, and the tender attitude which he assumes without delay, leave me no doubt of their mutual satisfaction. He is already on his knees before her, and is pressing her unresisting hand to his lips most passionately; and this is the signal for the storm breaking loose which is destined to overwhelm them. The worst fears of jealousy are confirmed beyond the power of doubting; mortal patience can endure no longer, a closet door suddenly bursts open, and like a clap of thunder Sempronius stands in the midst of the affrighted group.

The whole party seems petrified, not excepting Mrs Betty. Yes, yes, Mrs Betty, I make no doubt that your mistress's secret-keeper had many a pretty perquisite, but now you must prepare yourself to look about for another place.

Oh, how Sempronius storms! How he threatens the lover! How he upbraids his wife! How, with his hands clasped together, he devotes himself to the infernal deities, if he does not take most ample vengeance on the authors of his dishonour. The stranger seems to be converted into marble by this unexpected appearance, for he has not yet had the power of quitting his kneeling attitude.

Sempronius makes such an uproar that he will soon raise the whole house. The company is already increased by two new-comers, but their stature and shape easily enable me to recognize them for old acquaintances; the one is a large water-spaniel, which I have often seen running about the house, the other short figure, who holds a rushlight and stands there astonished in his shirt, can be no other than Willy. I suppose his father's voice had broken his sleep, and made him tremble lest thieves should have found their way into the lumber-room for the express purpose of carrying off such a treasure as his two darling pictures.

His entrance only seems to increase the displeasure of Sempronius. I think I can hear him cry at this distance, "What business have you out of bed, sir?" and at the same time he applies a hearty blow on the round cheek of poor Willy. The boy staggers under the effect of this uncivil salutation, and, fearful of a second, he hastens out of the room; only in his confusion mistaking the way out, he suddenly pulls open the door of Edward's room, and—— why!—what the deuce have we got here! A sixth person has tumbled head foremost into the room, Willy has fallen undermost, the spaniel helps the general confusion by barking, and has established himself on the back of the out-stretched intruder.

Willy has dragged himself from under his oppressor; he calls off the dog, raises the new comer, who brings his garments hastily into order, and is rewarded for his kindness by a second sound box on the ear. No, fair lady! for it seems the intruder is a female, even if that action had not revealed you, that shape and air are not to be mistaken; you can be no other than our dearly-beloved aunt. I suppose the kind soul was indulging her innocent curiosity to know how the storm would end, which she had been so instrumental in raising. With this view she concealed herself in the adjoining bed-room, and she was in the very act of listening at the keyhole with all her ears, when Willy unexpectedly pulled away the supporting door, and occasioned her to make her entrance into the society in a manner so novel and unceremonious.

This occurrence has the power of suspending even the torrent of Sempronius's resentment for a moment; the seducer has now recovered the use of his faculties, and has quitted his kneeling posture. He seems disposed to make use of the present confusion, in order to effect his escape; I saw Mrs Betty whisper him, and I guess that it was a kind hint to seize the opportunity of withdrawing, for he pulls his hat still more over his eyes and advances towards the door.

But Sempronius is aware of his intention, he springs after the fugitive, grasps him furiously by the arm, and forces him back into the middle of the chamber.

Now shame on the dastardly wretch; the seducer falls at the feet of the man whom he has so grosaly injured, and with uplifted hands seems to implore his compassion; and Cordelia—I am amazed at her assurance! she walks boldly up to her husband, as if she could justify what in itself is totally unjustifiable—or is she going honestly to avow her preference for the young offender, and her determination to set her husband's anger and the contempt of the world at defiance? I should rather suppose the latter, for with a confident air she extends her right hand to the kneeling stranger, and takes the dark lantern out of his! What is that for? Hey-dey! Now she pulls the seducer's hat off, throws the light full upon his face, and shows her husband—huzza! huzza! huzza! Edward, by heaven!

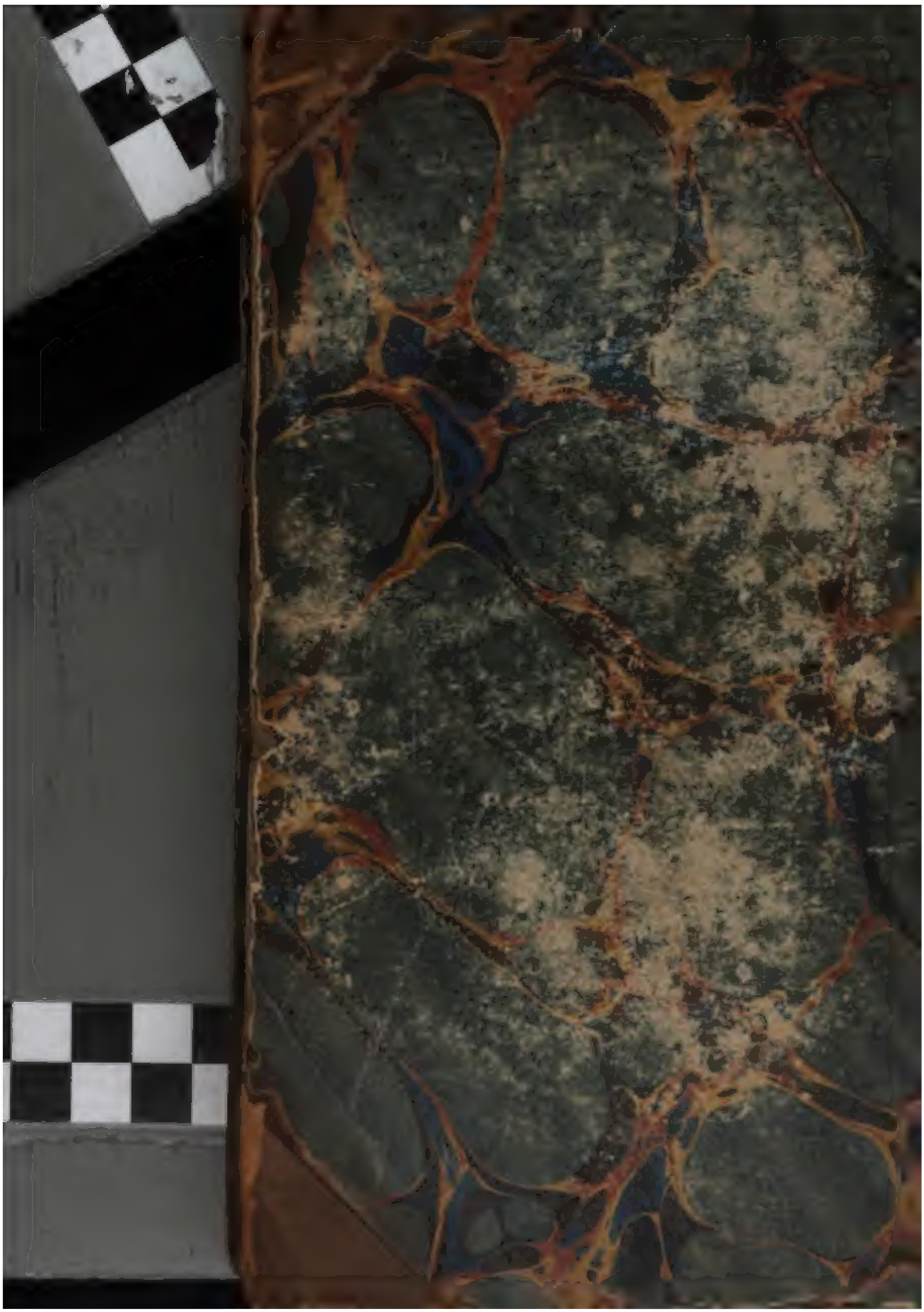
Virtuous Cordelia, what injustice have we all done you! How rejoiced am I to find myself mistaken, and Sempronius, I fancy, is by no means dissatisfied in finding a banished son, where he expected to find a favoured lover. It is at least certain, that he does not withdraw the hand which Edward has seized, and is in the act of pressing to his lips, and what makes me confident that his features have relaxed something of their severity is, that Mrs Betty is disposed to profit by the present moment to obtain absolution for her own share in the business, and without more ceremony she plumps down on her knees close by Edward. And now Cordelia, turning the lantern away from Edward's face, and throwing the light full upon her suppliant abigail's, discovers, not the features of Mrs Betty, but those of a girl, not more than seventeen, and lovely as the virgins of Mahomet's fabled paradise.

This, then, was the object of this midnight conference. While we fancied Edward many hundred miles distant from London, love had forbade his wandering further than the residence of his beloved; and for what purpose he sought it is now made quite evident, for he holds up the left hand of the fair stranger, and points to the ring which ornaments the wedding finger—this important step once taken, he communicated it to his adopted mother; he entreated permission to make known to her the bride of his selection, perhaps, before he set forward to seek with her his fortune through the world. This request must certainly have been conveyed in the supposed love-letter brought by the milliner's girl; the short space of time occupied in the perusal of her answer, as I said before, proved that it only contained a few words, probably nothing more than the time and place of meeting; and as Sempronius was ignorant of the address on the back, Edward must have taken the precaution of desiring his step-mother to direct to him under a feigned name, fearful lest his father by some accident should discover his being still in the metropolis, and prevent Cordelia from granting the so-much-desired meeting. The conversation which succeeded her return from the country, left me no doubt that all the intercourse between his wife and son had been prohibited by the stern Sempronius; Cordelia was obliged to have recourse to mystery, however innocent her purpose, and the neglected lumber-room, as being least liable to observation from the servants, was fixed upon as the most fit place for the interview, at which she proposed not only to embrace her step-son's wife as her adopted daughter, but to smooth the difficulties of their road through life, by giving the new-married couple all the pecuniary assistance which it lay in her power to command. It was for this purpose that she sealed up the bank-notes so carefully; it was for this—but while I am making these reflections, a most animated conference has taken place between the undeceived Sempronius and his amiable sister; he seems to reproach her and her misrepresentations for having practised upon his foibles, and rendered him so unjust to his wife, so harsh to his son, so contemptible in the eyes of them both, and even of himself. But the fair accused one does not listen to his remonstrances without evident signs of displeasure. She enters upon her defence with the more warmth, the less there is reason upon her side—he rejoins—she replies—with every moment their expostulations grow more vehement. But now Cordelia interposes like an angel of peace, gently places one white hand before the lips of her incensed husband, and extends the other in sign of amity to her embarrassed sister-in-law. It is received with an air of overstrained humility, that shows Miss Grimalkin would still be impertinent if she dared; and now she thinks it full as well to take her departure, courtseying all around her repeatedly and down to the very ground, and taking care to display all those signs of ironical civility which convert the compliment into an insult. Now she has reached the door, and *turning her back* most heroically upon the company with all the majesty of a turkey-cock,

she gratifies me with her absence. Good night, thou model of stale virginity! Sleep soundly upon your well-earned laurels, and may your dreams be as sweet as your temper.

With her departure from our horizon all clouds seem to vanish. Her brother appears to be grown quite another man, his brow is so clear, his countenance is so much brightened, and his whole attitude expresses that he feels so much more at his ease. Now he embraces his charming wife, and that repentant kiss entreats her pardon of his unjust suspicions. Now he extends the hand of paternal forgiveness to his son, who presses it to his bosom with enthusiasm; and now, when Edward leads the partner of his heart towards him, does he not fold her to his bosom with all the tenderness of a father? Oh! how lovely appears this scene of domestic reconciliation, though acted in an old lumber-room, and only viewed by the unsteady glimmerings of a rushlight and a dark lantern.

You may as well lay down your pen, my dear uncle, there is nothing more to be seen, or, if there were, I could not see it, till the tears are wiped away, which have dimmed my telescope. And now, thou happy family, for to-night farewell! Here I lay down the office of your historian; and having now been for above two months Edward's most intimate confident and warmest friend, to-morrow I'll set myself at work to become his acquaintance.

THE END.

Printed by CHARLES REYNELL, Little Pulteney street.